

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



J O H N

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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The Reason for the Season

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 8, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 1:1–3, 11–14, 18

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Introduction

The Gospel of John, chapter 1. If you did not bring a Bible with you, there, in the pew right before you, most likely you'll find a Bible. And, open up and read with us as we study together the Word of God. I want to read to you now a very, very, very familiar passage of Scripture—John 1:1–3: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”*

Now, let me tell you something about the Apostle John, who wrote these words: he was not a wordy writer, but he was a weighty one. And, I suppose that he has packed as much theology in three verses as could possibly be packed into three verses. There are a lot of things that the other gospel writers write about that John doesn't write about. You may not have thought about it, but, you know, the genealogy of Jesus is not given in the Gospel of John. You don't find it there. And, as a matter of fact, you don't find anything of the manger, the birth experience of the Lord Jesus. It's in the other gospels, but it's not in the Gospel of John. You find no reference to the boyhood of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John. As a matter of fact, in the Gospel of John, you don't find the story of the temptation of the Lord Jesus. Did you know that? As a matter of fact, in the Gospel of John, you don't find any of the parables of Jesus. They are mentioned in the other gospels but not in the Gospel of John. John brings the focus down real

quickly. John has a purpose, and John tells us what his purpose is. And, don't turn to it, but it's back at the back of the book. In John 20:31, he says, *"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [you] might have life through his name."* So, John's purpose is to bring you to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through the Gospel of John. Now, in these verses that I've just read to you, there are three things that just overwhelm my mind as I look at them.

I. The Sovereign Majesty of Jesus

The very first thing is what I want to call "the sovereign majesty of Jesus"—"the sovereign majesty of Jesus." John opens his gospel with a bombshell; he tells us a theological mountain peak. He tells us without stutter, without stammer, without equivocation, without apology, as clearly and plainly as human language can tell us, that Jesus Christ is God—unquestionably God, eternally God. Now, I want to remind you that John was a Jew and John had an ingrained horror against blasphemy. And, were John to have said that Jesus Christ is God and Jesus Christ not be God, that would have been the ultimate in blasphemy. Also, I want to remind you that when John wrote this, he wrote this as a mature man. This is not the opinion of a moment; he has had fifty or sixty years to think about it. This is his mature, unshakeable conviction: Jesus Christ is God.

A. Jesus Is Eternally God

Now, He is eternally God. Look in verse 1: *"In the beginning was the Word."* (John 1:1) Now, when John says, "In the beginning," he is not talking about a start; he is talking about a state. What I mean by that is this: He always has been God; He is eternally God. *"In the beginning was the Word."* (John 1:1) That noun, word, speaks of Jesus. One of the names of Jesus is the Word. Now, why would you call Jesus "the Word"? Notice it is there with a capital, just like my name is spelled with a capital: *"In the beginning was the Word."* (John 1:1) His name is the Word. Why does God describe His Son by calling Him "the Word"? Well, a word is an expression of an invisible thought. Now, I have thoughts in my head right now, but you can't see those thoughts. But, you can hear my words, and you know what I'm thinking by my words. So, a word is an expression of an invisible thought. Jesus Christ is the expression—the visible expression—of the invisible God. Jesus Christ expresses the Father.

Now, notice the Bible says, *"In the beginning was the Word"*—and notice what it says—*"and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (John 1:1) Now, the verb *was* is in the imperfect tense. It doesn't speak of something that just simply took place in the past and now it is completed; it speaks of something that goes on, and on, and on, and on. And, what John is saying is, in the beginning, before there was any earth, sun,

moon, and stars—before there was any creation, any cosmos—He was there. That is, beyond the confines of time—He was dwelling in the dimension where time does not count. And, I want to lay this on the hearts and minds of you, boys and girls, and please understand it: it may be deep, but when you think of Jesus, you do not begin with the manger; you do not begin with Mary. Jesus never, ever had a beginning; He always was. *“In the beginning was the Word.”* (John 1:1) He is eternally God.

B. Jesus Is Equally God

Second thing: He is equally God. Notice again in this verse: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”* (John 1:1) Now, in the Godhead, there is more than one person. We worship one God, but He has revealed Himself to us in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, the Bible teaches this right on the first page of the Bible: in the beginning, *“God said, Let us make man in our image.”* (Genesis 1:26) Now, the word *God* there is *Elohim*, and that is a plural noun. Now, we don’t worship three Gods. That would be idolatry; that would be blasphemy. We worship one God who has revealed Himself in three persons.

Now, I know that there are those who go from door to door and house to house in this city and almost every major American city, and they tell us that the doctrine of the Trinity is a pagan invention. And, they ridicule the doctrine of the Trinity; they say, “You worship three Gods: you have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And, one plus one plus one equals three.” But friend, one times one times one equals one. I want to tell you, we worship one God who has revealed Himself to us eternally in three persons. And so, Jesus is eternally God. Jesus is equally God. He is as much God as God the Father is God. He is as much God as God the Holy Spirit is God.

C. Jesus Is Essentially God

I want to say, therefore, He is essentially God. Everything that God does Jesus does. Everything that God thinks Jesus thinks. Everything that God has Jesus has. Look in verse 3: *“All things were made by him; and without him”*—that is, “the Word,” Jesus—*“was not any thing made that [is] made.”* (John 1:3) Everything that God is, does, or has Jesus is, Jesus does, and Jesus has. It was Jesus that spoke this universe into existence.

Have you ever thought about the immensity of the universe? One of the first philosophical thoughts I had as a child would be to look up at the stars and say, “Where does that ever end? How far could you go if you could go up, up, straight, as fast as you wanted to go and as long as you wanted to go? Would you ever come to the end? And, if you ever came to the end, how would it end? And, what would be on the other side of the end?” Have you ever thought about that? I used to think of that as a little child—oh,

the vastness of space. If you were to turn a telescope to the outer reaches of space, you would find that space goes on and on. And, and, light travels through space at one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second. That means that light travels six million miles a year. And, as you would travel out through space, everywhere you would see stars strewn like grains of sand on the night's velvet blackness. On, and on, and on, and on goes space. Galaxy after galaxy and countless worlds speeding through space at inconceivable speeds—behind them all was Jesus. *“Without him was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:3)

And then, lay aside your telescope and pick up your microscope, and begin to study the minutia of creation. Study the atomic building blocks, the atoms. Think about an atom. One atom would be one hundred and fifty millionth of an inch in diameter—I said, one hundred and fifty millionth of an inch in diameter. And yet, each of those atoms, completely invisible to the naked eye, is a whirling powerhouse of sheer energy. Each one of them is a miniature solar system in itself with a central nucleus and electrons flashing in orbit. I read something interesting: if you were to take a drop of water and take the molecules in one drop of water and translate or transform those molecules in one drop of water into grains of sand, you would have enough sand to build a concrete highway one-and-a-half-miles-wide and one-foot-thick from New York to San Francisco. That's how many molecules are in one drop of water. Think of the smallest of creation—the complexity of creation. Think of the vastness of creation. I want to tell you, Jesus made it all. *“Without him was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:3) He is God. We speak of His sovereign majesty.

Let me give you some other verses. Hebrews 1:8: *“unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”* God the Father calls His Son “God.” Titus 2:13 tells us that we're to be *“looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* Our Savior is the great God. The Apostle Thomas, when he finally was convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead, he fell before Him and said in John 20:28: *“My LORD and my God.”* That's the first thing John tells us, therefore, about Jesus. It's what I want to call “His sovereign majesty.” Friend, He is eternally God. He is equally God. He is essentially God. He is God. And, if you take that doctrine out of Christianity, you don't have Christianity any more.

II. The Simple Humanity of Jesus

Now, the second thing I want you to see that John tells us about, however—not only His sovereign majesty but His simple humanity. Continue to read now, and look in verse 14: *“the Word was made flesh”*—*“the Word was made flesh”*—*“and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and*

truth.” (John 1:14) Now, dear friend, that Word had to be translated into a language that we could understand. And, God translated Jesus into a language that we could understand, and the language that we could understand is flesh.

He manifested the Father. Look in verse 18: “*No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten [of the] Son*”—“*the only begotten Son*”—“*which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*” (John 1:18) And, the word *declared* here means He has exegeted Him. Now, when a preacher is getting ready to preach on a passage of Scripture, he does what we call an “exegesis”; that is, he studies the passage of Scripture, and he tries to determine what the Greek language, the Hebrew language—what it literally, actually says. And, when he studies that and compares scripture with scripture and does an honest statement so that the scripture begins to speak and he knows that he has it in context and in truth, we call that an “exegesis.” Now, the Bible says here in verse 18 that the Lord Jesus has exegeted the Father—He has declared the Father; He has manifested the Father. (John 1:18)

Now, the Word is translated into flesh. Let me tell you what the mystery of the manger is: that God would be able to translate deity into humanity—listen to me now—without discarding the deity or distorting the humanity. He did not discard the deity; He did not distort the humanity. This is the great mystery of the manger. Now, you listen to me: Jesus Christ is the God-man. He was not all God and no man. He was not all man and no God. He was half-man and half-God. He was all God and all man at the same time. He is the God-man—never another like Him. The Word was translated into flesh without discarding the deity and without distorting the humanity. He was as much man as any man who has ever lived; and yet, He is very God of very God.

What a mystery this is! That little baby—listen to me—wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger that we sing about, that Elmer Bailey sang about this morning, was the eternal, uncreated, self-existing Word made flesh. And, the baby in swaddling clothes of Luke 2 is the mighty God of Genesis 1. Now folks, this is Bible truth, and it is so fundamental to being a Bible Christian. That little two-year-old toddler that held Mary’s hand as she went about her tasks about the house was the mighty God who swung the planets into space. That busy little boy playing with the shavings in Joseph’s carpenter shop is God manifested in the flesh. That man who hung upon a cross and cried, “*I thirst,*” (John 19:28) was the mighty God who made all of the oceans, and all of the rivers, and all of the springs. He—and every drop of rain—He was God.

Now, notice what the Bible says here—that “*the Word was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us.*” (John 1:14) Look in verse 14: “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*” (John 1:14) That word *dwelt* is an interesting word; it literally means “He pitched His tent among us,” or “He tabernacled with us.” The word that is

translated here is actually the word for a tabernacle.

Did you know, back in the Old Testament, God gave the people a tabernacle? Do you know what the tabernacle was? It was a tent of worship. Now, if you had come upon the tabernacle in the wilderness, you would not have thought that it was very beautiful, because on the outside of that tabernacle it was covered with badger skins—rough, dark brown, unlovely; nothing beautiful to look at. And, there were no windows in the tabernacle. The only light that the tabernacle had was from a golden lamp—lampstand. That golden lampstand had seven prongs—a central shaft and six other shafts. But, on the inside of that tabernacle it was completely, indescribably beautiful. There was the fine twined linen. There was the scarlet, and the purple, and the blue, and the white, and the shimmering gold there. It was exquisite. Millions of dollars were spent to decorate the inside of that tent. Solid gold was everywhere. And, it was all glowing by the lamp of that seven-pronged candlestick. From the outside you would never have known the beauty, but once you went in and once that candle—that lampstand fed by oil, which is an emblem and a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God—once you saw it, it would take your breath away—the beauty.

Now, that's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. *"[He] was made flesh, and dwelt among us."* (John 1:14) If you looked at the Lord Jesus Christ, outwardly, you would not have been impressed. Now, I'm not being disrespectful. But, Isaiah the prophet said, "When we see Him, there's no form nor comeliness nor beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:2) He did not stand out among men. He was an average-appearing man, a nondescript man. But, for those of us who have come into Christ and for those of us who are illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God, we see the indescribable, exquisite beauty of the Son of God.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory..." (John 1:14) John the apostle had a glimpse of that hidden glory. *"We beheld his glory,"* John said. (John 1:14) John said, "We saw God living and breathing, laughing and crying, eating and drinking. We saw Him in public. We saw Him in private. We saw Him as He was hailed as a Messiah, nailed as a malefactor. We saw Him when He was consulted. We saw Him when He was contradicted. We saw Him when He was cheered. We saw Him when He was crucified. We saw Him when He was buried. We saw Him when He was resurrected—the Word, the eternal God made flesh." There's no wonder that the Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:16: *"great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."*

Now friend, you must thank God for His sovereign majesty. He was the Word. But oh, thank God for His simple humanity, because had Jesus not become a man, you could not have been saved.

A. He Suffered as a Man

Now listen, He suffered as a man; it was necessary that He die as a man. You see, our standing before God was lost by a man. *“In Adam all die.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) And, our relationship to God and our dominion was legally lost. Adam forfeited it. And, *“in Adam [we] die.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) Adam sold out to the devil; he gave it over to the devil. The devil became the prince of this world, and men became slaves—slaves of Satan and slaves of sin. And, the son of a slave could not redeem a slave because all sons of slaves themselves are slaves. And so, God had to do a new thing. No son of Adam could redeem us. God had to send His Son, made in the likeness of sinful flesh and yet without sin. And, *“Him having known no sin became sin for us.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21) And, He paid the price; He ransomed us. He suffered, bled, and died as a man. And, had He not become a man, you never could have been saved. This is the reason for the virgin birth. He came as He did because He needed to be what He was—the Son of God. He was what He was to do what He did—to die for our sins on the cross.

B. He Subdued as a Man

Now, listen to me: He suffered as a man, and not only did He suffer as a man; He subdued as a man. When Jesus Christ came against Satan there in the wilderness... Remember, the first Adam lost all in a garden. Jesus, the second Adam, gained it all back in a wilderness. Jesus met the devil head on, and Jesus overcame the devil. Now, when Jesus overcame the devil—listen—He did not overcome the devil as God would overcome the devil; He overcame the devil as man filled with God would overcome the devil. Jesus emptied Himself. He laid aside all of the prerogatives that were His, essentially, as deity. We call that, in theology, the “kenosis,” the self-emptying. He emptied Himself of all of that. He took upon Himself human flesh and the limitations of that human flesh. And then, Jesus Christ, filled with the power of the Spirit, went against the devil, and He overcame the devil.

You say, “Well, what’s the point? What difference does it make how He overcame the devil?” Well, friend, if He overcame the devil as God, that’s no encouragement to me. I just say, “Well, big deal. Of course God can overcome the devil.” But, when He overcame the devil as man, then He’s my example. He did not pull rank on me. And, Jesus Christ did not use any power to overcome the devil that is not available to Adrian Rogers or to you tonight. You see, as a man, He suffered. Oh, friend, listen: His sufferings were not mock sufferings.

I told you this before, but one night in a hotel room in Miami, Florida, I read about Gethsemane. And, for the first time in my life, I realized how Jesus suffered. All the rest of the time—I was a preacher by this time—all the rest of my time I’d say, “Yes, He

suffered,” but somehow I just had in my mind, “Well, He was God, and as God, He was able to bear it and pull it off.” But, God showed me in that hotel room that night how Jesus suffered. My heart was so filled. I was so overwhelmed with praise that I did something I’m not given to doing: I shouted a country shout that I’m sure was heard all over that motel. It’s a wonder the guards did not come, thought there’d been a murder in that room. Ah, dear friend, I was so filled with praise and awe at the way my Savior suffered for me!

Folks, He was not going through some little mockery when He said, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39) He did shrink from the cross. Don’t try to bolster up His manhood and make Him look good and say, “He didn’t shrink from it.” Friend, He did shrink from it. He did not want that cup. He knew what was involved and everything. And then, He cried out against it. He was a man, and as a man, He faced the cross and He said, “O Father, please, if there be some other way...” (Matthew 26:39) And, the silence from heaven said there’s no other way. And, Jesus drank that bitter cup. He suffered as a man, sir, but He subdued as a man. He overcame Satan as a man, and He’s my example.

C. He Sympathizes as a Man

And, I want to tell you, He sympathizes as a man. The Bible says, *“We have not [a] high priest [that] cannot be touched with the feeling of our [infirmity]; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* (Hebrews 4:15) And, Jim Whitmire, when you hurt, He hurts. And, and, I want to tell you, Dale, when you hurt, He hurts. And, He knows how you feel. Thank God. Oh, He didn’t have to become a man to know how you feel, because He knows all things. But friend, He became a man, that we might know that He knows. Do you understand what I’m saying? He was here, that we might know that He knows, because He suffered, He walked, He felt, He hurt, He lived, He breathed, He wept, He hungered as we do. Thank God for His sovereign majesty, but oh, thank God for His simple humanity!

III. The Saving Ministry of Jesus

But, one last thing John tells us about... And, by the way, I don’t think I gave the title of the message. It’s “The Reason for the Season”—why Jesus came into this world. There’s a third thing I want you to see, and they’re both based on the first two things: His sovereign majesty, His simple humanity, leads to His saving ministry. Look, if you will please, now, in verse 11—John 1:11: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* (John 1:11–13)

Now, here you have great things. You have the greatest tragedy: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (John 1:11) You have the great transaction: *“But as many as received him...”* (John 1:12) You have the great transformation: *“became the sons of God.”* (John 1:12) What a miracle—what a miracle. He came to earth, that we could go to heaven. He was born of a virgin, that we might be born again. He became a Son of man, that we might become sons of God. He died, that we might live. He came unto His own in order that He might save us.

And, how are we saved? Well, verse 13 speaks of the new birth: *“Which were born, not of blood...”* (John 1:13) Now, what does that mean? That means we were not—we’re not—saved by natural generation; that is, because our parents are Christians, that doesn’t make us Christians. We cannot inherit it. We are born not of blood. It’s not handed down through the bloodline. *“Nor of the will of the flesh”* (John 1:13)—it is not by natural generation; it is not by natural determination. Salvation is not the works of men’s hands. It is not the will of the flesh. It is not by good deeds. It is not by living a good life. Not by natural generation, not by natural determination, but by supernatural regeneration—we are *“born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the [work] of man, but of God.”* (John 1:13) That means that God, the God-man who died for us, now provides for us a new birth.

And, what is this new birth? It means that we are born because we have received the nature of God. Do you know what it means to be regenerated? It means to be “regened.” Do you know I have in me the genes and chromosomes of my parents? But, when I am regenerated, I receive the genes of God, spiritually. I am regenerated; I am “regened.” I have a new nature. **Don’t get the idea that a Christian is like a tadpole who somehow turns into a frog. That’s just a process of natural development. A Christian is more like a frog who turns into a prince after he’s received the kiss of grace.** Friend, it is a miracle. I receive a brand new nature. It’s not just a further development of the old nature that I have. This is the reason for the season.

I want to tell you something, friend: the new birth is not a luxury; it is a necessity. There was a preacher; his name was George Whitfield. He went all over America preaching, “Ye must be born again. You must be born again.” Somebody stopped him one time and said, “Mr. Whitfield, may I ask you a question?” He said, “Yes.” They said, “Why do you always preach, ‘You must be born again’?” “Ah,” he said, “that’s simple: ’tis because you must be born again.” Amen.

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. John has told us about the sovereign majesty of Jesus. He’s told us about the simple humanity of Jesus.

He's told us about the saving ministry of Jesus. That's the reason for the season. *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."* (John 1:11) Will you receive Him right now? If you'll receive Him, He'll give you the power to become a son of God. And, right where you are in your seat tonight, the greatest transaction that a person could imagine will take place: God will make you His child.

Would you like to be saved? If you would, I want to help you to be saved right now—right where you are in your seat—to be saved. You don't have to come forward to be saved; you can be saved right where you are. If you want to be saved, I want to help you right now. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to pray a prayer like this—if you feel the freedom to pray it, you pray it: "Dear God"—just speak to Him right now—"Dear God"—pray with all of your heart—"Dear God, I know you love me"—and friend, He does love you—"Dear God, I know that you want to save me"—and friend, He does want to save you, for the Bible says He's *"not willing that any should perish"* (2 Peter 3:9)—"Father, I need to be saved." And friend, you do need to be saved if you've not yet been saved, for the Bible teaches we're sinners by birth, by nature, and by practice. And, *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23) —"Father, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved"—tell Him that—"Lord, I want to be saved."

Now, pray this way: "Jesus, you died to save me. You paid for my sins on the cross. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus"—would you tell Him that right now where you are?—"I do trust you, Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart. I trust you, Jesus. Save me, Jesus"—ask Him right now—"Save me, Jesus"—with all of your heart—"Save me, Jesus. I turn from my sin. I receive you as my Lord, and Savior, and Master. I give you my life and my heart forever." Tell Him that. Ask Him to save you. The Bible says, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13)

Did you ask Him? You did? As best you know how? Do you mean it? All right, don't wait on any feeling. The Bible never says, "Feel a certain way." If, with all of your heart and soul, you trust Him right now, as best you know how, to save you, I want you to pray this way: "Thank you for saving me, Jesus. I don't deserve it, but I receive it by faith like a little child, because you promised and you cannot lie. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me. Thank you. You are my Savior, my Lord, my God, and my friend forever."

Now, I want you to pray one more thing. I want you to pray this: "Lord Jesus, I love you so much for saving me. I will follow you wherever you lead me, and by your grace, I will obey you when you speak. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of you. Give me the courage to make public what I've done. If you died for me, Jesus, I must live for you." Pray it again: "Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of you. If you died for me, I must live for you—and I will, as you help me. In your name I pray. Amen."

What Child is This?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 19, 2004

Main Scripture Text: John 1:1–4

Outline

Introduction

I. The Sacred Mystery of the Trinity

II. The Sovereign Majesty of the Trinity

III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, please, to the Gospel of John chapter 1. And hardly a Christmas goes by that we don't come back to this wonderful text.

Now, the title of our message and our thoughts today is, "What Child is This?" You know, we have a Christmas carol that we sing, and it has that phrase in it: what child is this? Who is that baby born in a manger? Now, the question is not incidental. There's no greater question that I could ask than, who is Jesus Christ? Answer it wrong, all else will be wrong. Listen, precious friend. Your eternal destiny hangs on that question.

What child is this? Who is Jesus? There is one right answer. The devil has given many wrong answers. Let me give you some of the wrong answers before we get into our Scripture.

One wrong answer is, He was a great man. You say, "What's wrong with that?" Well, it just compares Him to other men, and He's more than a man. H. G. Wells, the noted historian, gave in his writings those that he considered to be the ten greatest men of history, and Jesus Christ was number one on that list. Well, we might say that's good. No, I don't think it's good. Why? Jesus doesn't belong on anybody's list. You can talk about Peter the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Alexander the Great, but, precious friend, He is Jesus, the One and Only. Do you agree? Well, listen.

Then other say, "Well, He was a great moral teacher. He came to teach." Well, He was a moral teacher, but He was more than a moral teacher. A great intellectual, C. S. Lewis, has said this—it's been quoted many times, talking about Jesus: "I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people say about Jesus, 'I'm ready to accept Jesus Christ as a great teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.'" And then, C. S. Lewis goes on to say, "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 is a poached egg, or else He would be the devil of hell.” But then he goes on to say, “You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman, or something worse.” Then Lewis went on to say, “You can show Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and call Him a demon, or else you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let none of us come away with any patronizing nonsense about Him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.” Now, friend, those are good words. Our Lord is either liar, Lord, or lunatic. And He is Lord, and we have to understand this.

Now, some say, “Obviously, He was a great man,” others, “He was a great moral teacher.” Some say that He was a messenger of God. Do you know that Islam believes that Jesus is a messenger of God? Islam believes that Jesus is a prophet. The Koran teaches—and I quote: “Jesus was only a messenger of Allah—only a messenger of Allah.” Well, listen. Jesus was not a teacher come from God; He was God come to teach. We need to understand that yes, He’s a messenger; yes, He was great, and is great; yes, He is a moral teacher. But beyond that, what child is this?

The New Age gurus tell us that He’s some sort of a mystic medium. He is a channel through which we can reach our inner world and the netherworld and the other world. And they don’t know a thing about the Jesus of the Bible. He is the way that we reach God and come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. There are demon spirits—demon spirits—who have taken the name Jesus, and they say, “See what you know. You’re learning this through Jesus.”

Well, who was Jesus? Well, He was the Son of God, and is the Son of God. He was and is God the Son. Now, you have your Bibles open to John 1—let’s read the first four verses: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things—all things—were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” That’s John 1, verses 1 through 4. And we’ll come back to that in just a moment.

Now, how could He be God and the Son of God at the same time? How could He be God the Son and the Son of God? This is what we’re going to call the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now, I want you to listen carefully this morning, because the message and the lesson is not a simplistic one. You’re going to have to pay attention. Now, if you check yourself out and let your mind go wandering about what you’re going to buy Susie for Christmas, I’m telling you, you’re going to cheat yourself of a great blessing. I have

prayed over this message, and I want you to listen, and I want you to listen carefully.

What child is this? If He is God of very God, then there is a doctrine taught in the Bible called the Holy Trinity, and to negate that doctrine is the source of heresy. Islam does not believe in the Trinitarian God. Sometimes people say, "Well, Islam believes in one God, and Christians believe in one God, and Jews believe in one God. Isn't it wonderful we all believe in the same God?" If they don't believe in the Trinitarian God, they don't believe in the same God. Just because you believe in one God, there may be a false god that you believe in. We can say that Tennessee has one capital. One person says it's Nashville. Another person says it's Memphis. "But oh, isn't it wonderful that we all believe in one capital?" No. Things that are different are not the same. Islam does not believe in the Trinitarian God. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the Trinitarian God. Mormons do not believe in the Trinitarian God. Our dear Jewish friends reject the idea of a Trinitarian God. You say, "Pastor, what is this Trinitarian thing that you're talking about?" What I'm trying to say to you is that this idea and this truth that is taught in the Word of God is a stumbling block to many people, and it is a pathway to error to many people.

Now, what I want us to understand is that we don't worship three gods, but we worship one God who has revealed Himself in three Persons. For example, God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Spirit is God. Now, we know that God the Father is God, but let's see what the Bible says about God the Son.

We find out that God the Son is the One who created everything. Exodus chapter 3, verse 14: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Let me give you the background for that passage of Scripture. Again, if you want to write it down in your Bible, Exodus chapter 3, verse 14. Moses was saying, "God, you want me to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, I need some credentials. I want them to know that it's not just my idea. Who is behind me? What shall I say?" And God out of heaven gave to Moses the most sacred name that the Jews know for Almighty God, and Christians also. God said to Moses, "Moses, you tell them that I AM sent you. I AM THAT I AM." Not I WAS, not I WILL BE. He is the great I AM. He never had a beginning, will never have an ending. He is the uncreated, self-existent God. And it was a God that the Egyptians knew nothing about, because they had literally thousands of gods. "Moses, tell them that I AM sent you," a sacred name for God in the Old Testament. Ask any Jew about the term I AM, and he will tell you it is the sacred name for Jehovah.

But now, there were some who were badgering the Lord Jesus Christ. They were sneering at Him, and they were laughing at His virgin birth. They said, "We have not been born of fornication." That is, "You were born out of wedlock, out of fornication."

And Jesus answered them and said in John chapter 8, verses 56 through 58: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day...”—now, Abraham had been dead for centuries, and yet Jesus said—“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” Now, do I have your attention? Now, listen to this: “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily...”—and when Jesus says, verily, verily, that means truly, truly; amen, amen; pay attention, pay attention. Are you paying attention?—“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was—now, listen—I AM.” Don’t miss that. Here Jesus is equating Himself with the great eternal, self-existing God that sent Moses so long ago, with the most holy name among the Jews for the one and only true God. The Bible says, after Jesus said this, they took up stones to stone him. Do you know why? Because to them it was blasphemy for any two-legged man to say I AM. God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is not merely an influence from God; He is God Himself.

Now, here I want you to take and put in your margin Acts chapter 5. And if you’re nimble of finger, turn to it. Acts chapter 5 and verses 3 through 4. There were some people who lied to the early church. They said that they had sold a piece of property for a certain amount of money and had given it all to the church. They were lying. Simon Peter knew that they were lying, and here’s what Simon Peter said to the husband in that family: “But Peter said unto Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?”—now, who was the lie told to? The Holy Ghost—“why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?—now, listen to this next statement: Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” Earlier he said, “You’ve lied to the Holy Ghost.” Now he says, “You’ve lied to God.” Ipso facto, the Holy Ghost is God.

God the Father is God. God the Son is God. He is the great I AM. God the Holy Spirit is God. These are three in one, co-equal and co-eternal. Now, you’ve sung it many times, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Merciful and Mighty! God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!”

Now, having said all of that—that’s the front porch—let’s go in the house. I want to give you three wonderful thoughts about God the Trinity.

I. The Sacred Mystery of the Trinity

And, first of all, I want you to think of what I’m going to call the sacred mystery of the Trinity—the sacred mystery of the Trinity. Go back to John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Now, how do we know that Jesus is God? Because God told us so. Well, how can He be God and the Son of God at the same time? It is a sacred mystery. How do you know about the Holy Trinity? Only by divine revelation. You don't understand this by logic. You don't understand this by investigation. You don't understand this by philosophy. You do not understand this by mathematics. So lay your pride in the dust and understand that this is a sacred mystery. And don't ever cast anything out, because you can't understand it. John Wesley said, "How can a worm understand a man?" How are you going to understand Almighty God, being finite, and He being infinite?

Put in your margin 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." This is a great mystery. It may sound contradictory to you and outside the realm of logic, but I want to remind you that there are many things that you must believe that are contradictory and outside the realm of logic.

Infinity—which of you understands infinity—that things go on and on and on and on and on and on? When I was a little boy, I used to lie in bed and think, how big is the universe? Does it ever end? If it does end, how can it end, and what's on the other side when it ends? Have you ever thought about that? Friend, your mind cannot even begin to conceive of infinity; you just believe it.

Eternity—everything we know has a beginning and an end. But we know that time cannot cease to exist. On and on and on and on and on and on is something we call an eternity." You don't understand that—you don't understand that. Time and eternity never had a beginning and never has an ending.

Not only infinity, and eternity, but you don't understand that God is everywhere at the same time. How can God be here and there? That's contrary to human logic. If I'm here, I can't be there. But God is a presence whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Now, you don't understand that. I don't understand that. We don't have to understand it. The idea of the Trinity does not rise or fall on logic, but by divine revelation. It is a sacred mystery.

Now, don't get the idea, therefore, that you can illustrate the Holy Trinity. Teachers often try to do this. They say that God is like this or God is like that. Friend, God's not like anything. He's God. Let me give you a verse—Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18: "To whom then will ye liken God? Or to what likeness will you compare to him?"

I can say one musician is like another musician. I can say one chair is like another chair, one light bulb is like another light bulb. He is God, the one and only, and He can't be compared.

A girl told her boyfriend, "I went out with Henry last night, and, Henry kissed me." The boyfriend said, "Is that so? I'll teach him." She said, "Oh, you couldn't teach him

anything.” You can compare one kiss to another kiss, but you can’t compare God to anything.

Now, we see reflections of the Trinity, and I’ve often mentioned this. These are not proofs, they’re not really even illustrations; they’re just reflections.

Time—time is past, present, and future. There’s one thing we call time. The past is not the present. The present is not the future. The future is not the past. All three are part of the same, yet all three are distinct. You can’t have a past without a present, and you can’t have a present without a future, and you can’t have a future without a past. Space—height, width, and depth. You can’t have height without width. You can’t have width without depth. You can’t have depth without height, but yet all are the same—space. These are but reflections of the Trinity; they are not illustrations of the Trinity. And, friend, don’t worry about the fact that you cannot understand the Trinity.

Now, we’re not talking about three Gods. That would be polytheism. We’re not talking about one plus one plus one equals three. We’re talking about one times one times one equals one. This is the one God.

Now, the fact that you don’t understand the Trinity ought not to bother you; it ought to give you comfort. I wouldn’t have any confidence in a God that I could understand, or a God that you can understand. Again, Wesley said, “Can a worm understand a man?”

I’m from Florida. I love the ocean. My blood’s about 75% salt water. But suppose I go down with a teacup and a pail and I try to put the Atlantic Ocean in that pail with my teacup. Do you think that you can put Almighty God in your teacup mind or in your rusty bucket? You can’t do it! God is bigger than you are. God is bigger than your logic. God is bigger than your understanding. And so what I’m trying to say to you is there is a sacred mystery. Great is the mystery of godliness. I’ll say, get it; you say, got it. Got it? Got it. Good.

II. The Sovereign Majesty of the Trinity

All right now, here’s the second thing I want you to understand about the wonderful Trinity: not only the sacred mystery, but I want you to notice the sovereign majesty of the Trinity—the sovereign majesty of the Trinity. God is God, God the Father. God the Son is God. God the Spirit is God. All are sovereign.

Look, if you will, in John 1 again, verses 2 through 3, speaking of Jesus, the Word: “The same was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by Him—who? Jesus—and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Now, wait a minute, Adrian. Did Jesus create the world, or did God the Father create the world? Yes, yes!

Look, if you will, in John 1:3: “All things were made, by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” And then put in your margin Genesis 1:1: “In the

beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word God there is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, and it is a plural noun, but it takes a singular verb. And, actually, if you were to translate *Elohim* in your Bible in Genesis 1:1, where it says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” if you were to translate literally *Elohim*, it’s plural, and it would say Gods—G-O-D-S—created the heavens and the earth.

And, skip on down to Genesis 1, verse 26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image.” God, singular, said, “let us make man in our image.” Well, that doesn’t make sense unless you translate that word gods, *Elohim*, in the plural. It is a plural noun. God is speaking of Himself.

So how do you see this majesty of the Trinity? In creation. Number two: You see it in the great commandment. What is the great commandment? Again, here’s one of the most sacred verses to our Jewish friends. I’m talking now about the Trinity in the Old Testament. Don’t get the idea that the Trinity is a New Testament doctrine only.

Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 and 5—this is what God said to Israel: “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.” Now, look at the word there— one LORD. Actually, that word one is e-c-h-a-d, spelled out *echad*. And the word one there—“the LORD our God is one LORD”—does not speak of a singular one. It speaks of a plural one. You say, “Well, how can you have a plural one?”

You go to the grocery store and get a bunch of grapes, you’ve got what? One bunch of grapes. When the Bible speaks of husband and wife being one, it says in Genesis chapter 2, verse 24: “and they shall be one flesh.” A man and a woman, a unitary one. And Genesis 11, verse 6, God saw the people gathered together there to build the Tower of Babel, which He disapproved of, and He said there in Genesis 11:6: “the people is one.” Not the people are one; the people is one. In Numbers 13 and verse 23, the Bible speaks of them with one cluster of grapes.

Now, when the Bible says, “the LORD our God is one LORD,” it is one LORD who is a unity, a unity, one.

Think next of the eternal fatherhood of God. We’ve talked about the Trinity in creation. We’ve talked about the Trinity and the great commandment. Think about the Trinity in the eternal fatherhood of God. When did God become Father? When Jesus was born in Bethlehem? No!

I had a chance to speak with Mohammad Ali one time, spent about two hours with him sharing Jesus with him, and he said, “Well,” he said, “you say that Jesus is the Son of God because He was born of a virgin. Adam didn’t have a father or a mother. Wouldn’t that make him more a Son of God than Jesus?” I said, “Champ, 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.” Now, listen. Now, it’s very, very important that you understand in the Old Testament the Son of God is revealed. Let me give you quickly some verses.

Daniel 3, verse 25. Three Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace. When I say Hebrew children, I mean young, virile men, because they would not bow or budge or worship a despot’s golden image. But the king looked into the fiery furnace, and he said, “Didn’t we throw three men in the furnace?” Daniel 3, verse 25: “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.” You go through the fiery furnace, friend. You stand up for Jesus and you may be cast into a fiery furnace, but I’ll guarantee you, Jesus Christ will be nearer to you at that time than any time—one like the Son of God.

Put this verse down in your margin—Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 4: “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...?” In the Old Testament, the Bible speaks of the great creator God and His Son.

In Psalm chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, God has spoken of His purpose in this world. Now, listen to it. God says, in spite of all the wicked machinations and rebellions of men, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion, and will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” This was the Old Testament: “The LORD hath said unto me—Jesus is speaking—Thou art my Son.”

And then here’s a verse that you know that’s a great Christmas verse—Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: “For unto us a child is born, and to us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” One of the names for the Son is the mighty God.

I spoke to a Jehovah’s Witness about this, and they said, “Oh, yes, He is the mighty God, but He’s not Almighty God.” They die hard. If anybody ever tells you that—and you’re in Isaiah chapter 9—just fast-forward to Isaiah chapter 10, and look in now in verses 20 and 21: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped from the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD—underscore that—the Holy One of Israel—it’s talking about Almighty God—in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.” There, beyond the shadow of any doubt, Jehovah is called the mighty God. What I’m trying to say is this: that you see the Trinity not only in the New Testament; you see the Trinity in the Old Testament.

Now, the Gospel of Matthew begins with the Trinity. That’s the Christmas story. Let me just review that Christmas story with you for just a second. The angel came, to

Joseph, Matthew chapter 1, verses 20 and 23: “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in thee, in her is of the Holy Ghost—underscore Holy Ghost—and she shall bring forth a son—underscore son—and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord—underscore the Lord—by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us—underscore God with us. The Holy Spirit, the Son—God with us.

Now, the Christmas story begins with the Trinity. And how does the Gospel of Matthew that tells this story, how does it end? With Jesus saying in Matthew chapter 28, verses 19 and 20 and forward, Jesus is giving His Great Commission to the church, to you, to me. Listen: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations—now, watch this—baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Now, you’re reasonable people. You look halfway intelligent. You say, “You don’t look so good yourself.” Listen. Would it not be sheer blasphemy for Jesus to put Himself on the level with the Father if He’s not on the level with the Father? “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” So that’s the second thing I’m teaching you.

I’ve said there’s a sacred mystery. There is a sovereign majesty. There is God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, and three are one Almighty God.

III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity

Now, let’s tighten the focus and come to the conclusion very quickly. I want you to see the saving ministry of the Trinity. That’s the reason I said I’m not just talking to you about niceties. I am talking to you about your eternal destiny. Your destiny depends upon the Holy Spirit.

Now, I want you this time to go, if you will, to the Book of Ephesians, and this time open your Bible to Ephesians chapter 1—Ephesians chapter 1—and let me tell you the reason that your destiny hangs on the Trinity.

First of all, you were selected by God the Father. Listen to Ephesians 1, verses 3 and following: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, according—underscore this—as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” Before God swung this world into space, God selected, God chose us. And if God had not first chosen us, we never would have chosen Him. Aren’t you glad that God took the initiative? God looked down through the corridors of time, and God chose you. You are the elect. You are the

chosen. God knew from all eternity that you would receive Him and trust Him. You're selected by the Father.

And then, you're saved by the Son. Look now in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 6: "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved—who is the beloved? Jesus—in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." God the Father chose us. The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us. We are saved by the Son. Apart from the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ no one is saved.

But not only are we selected by the Father, and saved by the Son, but we are sealed by the Spirit. Look, if you will, in Ephesians 1 now, verses 13 and 14: "In whom ye also trusted—that's Jesus—after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest—or the down-payment—of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Conclusion

I wish I had more time to get into all those verses. But, friend, this is the Holy Trinity, the saving ministry of the Trinity. God has set His eyes upon you. It is God who has selected you, it is God who wants to save you, and it is Jesus who died to save you, to redeem you, to give the forgiveness of sin. And once you trust the Lord Jesus, it's the dear Holy Spirit of God who seals you unto the day of redemption. That's the reason I believe in eternal security. The Holy Spirit of God seals us to the day of redemption.

In the Bible terminology, a seal doesn't talk about the kind of a seal that you might have in the transmission of your car. It doesn't talk about an animal that lives in the water that can bounce a ball on its nose and flops about. The word seal is like a seal we would put on a document, a stamp. The Bible says the king's seal no man can break. You're sealed with the Holy Spirit. A seal in Bible government meant a finished transaction: signed, sealed, and delivered. It means a transfer of ownership. And it speaks of protection, because the seal is there on it.

Are you listening to me? You were selected by the Father, saved by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit. Is that not wonderful? You see, this, friend, is the saving ministry of the Holy Trinity. We review, and then we pray. It's a sacred mystery. Don't try to understand it. Somebody said, "Try to understand it, you'll lose your mind; deny it, you'll lose your soul." God is bigger than you are. The only way you can know this is for God to say it is so. And because God says it is so, it is so.

It's a sacred mystery. But, oh, the sovereign majesty. God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Spirit is God. Not three Gods, but one God in three. And then,

the saving ministry. Selected by the Father, saved by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit. To Him be glory forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. Don't miss it.

Don't refuse Jesus. Don't go your sinful way into hell when Jesus, as Laurie sang, is standing there, saying, "Come unto me all of you who labor and are heavy laden; I'll give you rest."

Bow your heads in prayer.

And if you're not certain today that you're saved, I want you to be saved. God wants you to be saved. Christians around you want you to be saved. The devil is a liar. He wants you to be damned. Don't listen to a liar. Satan didn't sweat blood in Gethsemane for you. You can be saved by trusting Jesus Christ. Oh, friend, listen. The Savior is seeking you today. He's knocking at your heart's door. If you want to be saved, I want you to pray a prayer like this: Dear God—just speak to Him—Dear God, I need You so much. I have failed. I'm a sinner. I'm weak. I need to be redeemed. I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. Would you tell Him that? I trust You, Jesus, right now. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. I believe You're the Son of God and God the Son. And now I invite You into my life to take control of my life. And begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Thank You for the gift of salvation. I receive it as a gift. I'm weak; You're strong. You'll have to take care of me and keep me, and I know You will, because if I believe on You, You'll seal me with the Spirit. That's so wonderful, Lord. Now, Lord, help me not to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make this public, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

What Child Is This?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 19, 2004

Main Scripture Text: John 1:1–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sacred Mystery of the Trinity
- II. The Sovereign Majesty of the Trinity
- III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity

Conclusion

Introduction

Laurie, thank you for letting Jesus sing through you. Thank you for your Christian countenance and for your devotion and your anointing.

Well, good morning. And we're here to study God's Word. And I want you to take God's Word and open to John 1. Do you have a Bible with you? Let's lift it up. Let me see it. Oh, that's good. Wave it at the devil.

All right now, just keep your Bibles open there to John 1. You know, we sing that Christmas carol, and it has a phrase in it, "What child is this?" Who was this baby that we're singing about, and whose birth that we are celebrating? What child is this? There is one right answer. The devil has given many wrong answers.

For example, there are those who say that Jesus was a great man. Well, He was a great man, but if that's what you think of Jesus—a great man—and that's your concept of Jesus, you miss it altogether. H. G. Wells, the noted historian, made a list of the ten greatest men in history and Jesus Christ was number one of that list. You say, "That's wonderful." I don't think so, because He doesn't belong on anybody's list. You can talk of Peter the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Alexander the Great, but, friend, He was Jesus, and is Jesus, the One and Only. And to compare these men with Jesus would be like comparing the Rocky Mountains to a grain of sand. Jesus is the one and only.

And there are others who say, "Well, you know, Jesus was a great messenger sent from God." Islam believes that Jesus was a messenger sent from God—did you know that? Islam does not deny that Jesus was here on this earth, that He lived, but here's what the Koran says. The Koran, that is, the Bible of Islam, teaches Jesus was a messenger of Allah. That is, He just simply came to tell us about God. Friend, He was not only a messenger of God to teach us about God; He was God come to teach. He

was God in the human flesh.

And there are some New Agers, who say, “Well, Jesus is a mystic medium.” Did you know there are demon spirits who go by the name of Jesus? And they say, “Well, we can get you in contact with the dead and your inner world and the netherworld, and so forth.” Of course, it’s sheer blasphemy. The devil has given many wrong answers.

I suppose the one that is assumed the most, and abused the most, is that Jesus was a great moral teacher. Now, He was a great teacher and He was moral, but you cannot stop there. Let me tell you what C. S. Lewis said, and C. S. Lewis had a brilliant perceptive mind. Perhaps you’ve heard this quote before, but I want to share it with you because it is powerful. Now, we’re asking just, what child is this? Now, here’s what C. S. Lewis had to say: “I’m trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people say about Him. I am ready to accept Jesus Christ as a great teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God. Now, some people say, ‘Well, you know, I don’t believe He’s God, but He was a great teacher.’” Then, C. S. Lewis goes on to say, “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 is a poached egg, or else He would be the devil of hell.” And then, Lewis went on to say, “You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman, or something worse. You can show Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and call Him a demon, or else you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let none of us come away with any patronizing nonsense about Him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.” What Lewis is saying: you don’t tip the hat to Jesus; you bow the knee to Jesus Christ.

Now, we’re going to be talking today about who Jesus is. And, actually, we’re going to be studying what is known as the doctrine of the Trinity. Now, don’t check me out. Don’t think about what you’re going to get Susie for Christmas. Look up here. This question that we’re going to be talking about—what child is this?—is a question upon which your eternal destiny hangs. You can be wrong about other things, but you dare not, you must not, be wrong about this. What child is this?

Well, to understand who Jesus Christ is, we have to understand a doctrine called the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. May I tell you that Islam does not accept the Holy Trinity. May I tell you that Unitarians do not accept the Holy Trinity. May I tell you that false cults do not accept the Holy Trinity. Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, do not believe in the Holy Trinity. Now, you must understand this in order to understand who the Lord Jesus Christ is. To misunderstand this, to refuse this, is to lose your soul.

Now, we don’t worship three Gods, but we worship one God who has revealed Himself in three persons. Now, listen carefully. God the Father is just that; He is God.

God the Son is God. And God the Spirit is God. Now, we take it for granted that God the Father is God, but is God the Son God? Yes, He is. He is the very God of very God. The Jews in the Old Testament believed in a God whose name was I AM. And I believe in that God.

Moses said, “Look,” to God when he was praying. “You want me to lead these people out of Egypt? I have to have some credentials. When I go to them and tell them, they’re going to ask me, ‘Who sent you?’” And Yahweh, Jehovah God said, “You tell them that I AM THAT I AM sent you.” And God revealed something about Himself there to Moses. “I AM THAT I AM. I never had a beginning. I will never have an ending. I AM the great eternal, pre-existent, Almighty God. I AM THAT I AM,” the most holy name for God that the Jews knew.

Now, when Jesus taught, the Pharisees came against Him. They could not believe the authority with which He spoke, and they tried to belittle Him. As a matter of fact, they said, “Why, He is an imposter. He was born out of wedlock. He was born of fornication.” Put in your margin John 8, verses 56 through 58. We haven’t even gotten to John 1 yet, but we’ll get there in a moment. But John 8:56 through 58, Jesus is speaking to these Jewish leaders, and He says to them, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day...—now, notice—my day, and were glad.” The Jewish patriarchs looked, saw the day of Jesus, and it brought them great joy. Now, they couldn’t understand this. Abraham had been dead for centuries, and Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad.” Now, notice their retort. “Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou, hast thou seen Abraham? Now, he lived so long ago. What do you mean he saw my day?” Now, listen to what Jesus said to them. “And Jesus answered and said unto them, before Abraham was, I AM.” Not I WAS, not I GOT HERE FIRST, “but I’VE ALWAYS BEEN. Before Abraham was, I AM.” Jesus is the great I AM. Can you say amen to that? They didn’t believe it. They said, “Look, we be not born of fornication. We come from a wonderful married family.” But Jesus said, “Look, I was in the bosom of the Father and have been for all eternity.”

Now, God the Father is God. God the Son is God. Do you know what they did when Jesus said, “Before Abraham was I AM?” They took up stones to stone Him because to them that was sheer blasphemy. And C. S. Lewis was right. If Jesus is not God, He is a devil from hell to say such things.

Now, God the Father is God. God the Son is God. And God the Spirit is God. In the New Testament, in Acts chapter 5, there’s a story of a man and his wife. Their names were Ananias and Sapphira. And Ananias and Sapphira, wanting to be praised and petted and flattered, brought a love offering to the church. Now, they had a piece of property and they sold it. And they came to Simon Peter and said, “We want to make

this love gift to the church, and we're just giving everything that we got from that property to the church." Peter said, "Now, wait a minute." Peter knew they were lying, and he said, "When you had it, it was in your hand. You could have done with it what you wanted. You didn't have to give it all if you didn't want to. But why have you said that you have done that when you haven't done that." And then Peter said, "You have not lied unto men, but unto God." Now, earlier in that same passage, he said, "Why hath Satan put this in your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost—to lie to the Holy Ghost? And then he said, "You've not lied unto men; you've lied unto God." What is the implication? What is the truth? To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Spirit is God. They are three in one, co-equal and co-eternal. Now, I'll say, get it; you say, got it. Get it? Good. Now, I want you to pay attention. Now, listen. Don't miss this. We're not talking about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. We are talking about the very nature, the essence of the baby born in Bethlehem.

You've sung about the Trinity many times, and we sing it perhaps carelessly, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Merciful and Mighty! God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!"

Now, there are three things that I want us to learn here out of John chapter 1. All of that was the front porch. We're about to get into the house now. Three things I want us to learn from John chapter 1 about the blessed Trinity, and when we learn that, we're going to learn who Jesus is.

I. The Sacred Mystery of the Trinity

The first thing I want you to learn is what I'm going to call the sacred mystery of the Trinity. Look, if you will, here in John chapter 1, verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word." That word that is written there in English is the Greek word *logos*. And a word, as I told you last Sunday, is the visible, audible expression of an invisible concept. Jesus is the one who makes the visible God, the invisible God, visible, so He is called the Word. He is the one who manifests the Father, just as my words today are making known to you what's in my heart. Jesus is called the Word, and He was in the beginning. But now, listen to this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." How can you be with God and God at the same time? That, friend, is a sacred mystery.

How do I know about the Holy Trinity? Because I figured it out? Of course not! Because God revealed it to us here in John 1:1 and in other passages. Now, you lay your intellectual pride in the dust. You're not going to know this by philosophy. You're not going to know this by logic. You're not going to know this by investigation. You're not going to learn this by mathematics. It is a sacred mystery. Does that bother you that

there's a sacred mystery? John Wesley said, "How can a worm understand a man?" God is finite. We're infinite. We must know Him by revelation. We don't know Him by investigation. Now, it may sound contradictory to you that God can be one God and yet three. Well, friend, there are a lot of things that are contradictory to you. There are a lot of things that you don't understand. You don't even understand how beautiful flowers can come out of black dirt. You accept it. You don't understand the concept of infinity.

When I was a little boy, I was a little philosopher. I would lie in bed and think about infinity; that is, space, infinite space, going on and on and on and on and on and on. I said that everything I know has to end somewhere. But then, if it ever ended, what would be on the other side? Have you ever thought about that? I mean, that's infinity. And we can't understand infinity.

We can't understand eternity because everything we know has a beginning and an ending, except this sermon. We can't understand eternity. But time goes on and on and on and on, never had a beginning, never has an ending. You don't understand that. I don't understand that. There are so many things that we do not understand.

Your understanding of the Trinity is not based on logic, but on revelation. And, you know, I'm so glad of that. I'm so glad. Aren't you glad that we have a God we can't understand? See, I wouldn't trust in a God I could understand.

I'm from Florida, born near the Atlantic Ocean. My blood's about 75% salt water. I love the ocean. But suppose I were to go down there to the ocean with a rusty pail and a teacup, I'd take that teacup and I'm going to start bailing, taking water out of the ocean and I'm going to put it in that rusty bucket. I'm not going to put the ocean in that bucket, would you agree? And I'm telling you—listen—don't you take your little teacup of logic and try to put God in your rusty bucket. You can't do it. God is awesome. God is big. There are a lot of things that you can't understand. Every now and then I hear people say, "Well, I'll tell you what the Trinity is like," and they want to give an illustration. There is no illustration. There's nothing that you can compare God with. I can compare that Minister of Music to this Minister of Music. I can compare that chair with this chair, that light to this light, but what am I going to compare God with?

Put this verse down here—Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18: "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto him?" There's nothing you can compare God to. You don't find the Trinity in any other thing. It stands alone. Now, there are reflections of the Trinity, and I've taught you. We see reflections of the Trinity in time. Time is past, present, and future. You can't have a past without a present. You can't have a present without a future. You can't have a future without a past. God created time, and so it reflects His tri-unity. Space is height, width, and depth. Space is one entity, but it has three parts: height, width, and depth. Now, you can't have width without

depth, and you can't have depth without height, and you can't have height without width. They're all part of the same, but yet they are distinguishable.

Now, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all the same, but They are distinguishable. And don't try to compare God with anything. You can't prove the Trinity; you believe the Trinity. Try to prove it, you'll lose your mind; deny it, you'll lose your soul. Don't try to compare God to anything. He's God. There's only one God, would you agree to that?

A girl, whose boyfriend was Henry, went out with another boy. His name was John. And she said, "Henry, I hate to tell you this, but when I went out with John, John kissed me last night." Henry said, "He did! I'll teach him something." She said, "Henry, you couldn't teach him anything." You can compare one kiss with another kiss, but you're not going to compare God with anything else. Friend, listen to me. It is a sacred mystery. Put aside your mathematics. You say, "Well, one plus one plus one equals three." Well, one times one times one equals one. Listen. God is God. And so this is a mystery. It is not contrary to reason; it is beyond reason. The only way we know about the sacred mystery is by divine revelation. And so, don't worry that you can't understand it. You ought to get a little antsy if you could understand it because it would mean that the ocean called God could fit in your bucket.

II. The Sovereign Majesty of the Trinity

All right now, number two: not only do I want you to see what I'm calling the sacred mystery, but I want you to see the sovereign majesty of the Trinity—the sovereign majesty of the Trinity. God, who is very God, exists in all three persons, and each one is sovereign. Now, look again in John 1, verses 2 through 3: "The same...—talking about the Word—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, who made everything? What does Genesis 1:1 say? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What does John 1 say in verse 3? That without Jesus nothing was made. *Ipsa facto*, as night follows day, if God made everything, and Jesus made everything, then Jesus is God. You see, the word in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created" is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which is really a plural, and it literally says, "In the beginning Gods made heaven and earth." It's a plural noun. It takes a singular verb. You see this more demonstrated if you go down to Genesis 1, verse 28: "And God said, Let us make man in our image." Now, what would you expect it to say? Let us make man in my image. But it says, "Let us make God in our image, and in our likeness let us make him." God said our—our—likeness. Let *us*. Well, is He talking of one or is He talking of three? Yes. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in concert, in Trinity, made

everything. Now, you see, therefore, the Trinity in the very front page of the Bible, the very first verse.

You see the Trinity in the great commandment that God gave to Israel; not only in creation, but the great commandment. What is the great commandment? Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 and 5: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. The LORD our God is one LORD.” So our Jewish friends say, “See, you can’t have a Trinity. There’s only one Lord.” But the word one there, *echad* in the Hebrew, *echad*, means one as a unity.

If you go to Kroger’s and buy a bunch of grapes, you have one bunch of grapes. If you’re married, husband and wife are one flesh. In the Bible, in Genesis chapter 11, when the people were gathered together to build the Tower of Babel, the Bible says they were one people, “the people is one.” You see, this is a unity in singularity. Now, when the Bible says, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD thy God is one LORD,” it speaks of a unity in a plurality. Obviously, we don’t worship three Gods, but we worship one Lord who has revealed Himself in three persons.

We’re still thinking about the sovereign majesty. Think of the eternal fatherhood of God. You know, God is the eternal Father. He is called the everlasting Father. Well, if He is the eternal Father, that means there never was a time when His fatherhood did not exist. And for Him to be a Father, He has to have an eternal Son. There’s no way that He can be an eternal Father without an eternal Son.

In Daniel chapter 3, verse 25, He is called the Son of God. In Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 4, “And what is his Son’s name, can you tell?” In Psalm 2, verses 6 though 7, “The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” And then, Isaiah chapter 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son if given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God.” Who is the Son? The mighty God. I showed this to a Jehovah’s Witness one time. He said, “Oh, no. Yes, Jesus is called the mighty God, but He’s not Almighty.” You know, they die hard. So I said, “All right.” When we are in Isaiah chapter 9, let’s just flip over to Isaiah chapter 10, verses 20 and 21: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD—now, notice he’s talking here about the Lord Jehovah—the Holy One of Israel in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob—now, listen to this—unto the mighty God.” There, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, without any quibble, without any stutter, the mighty God is Jehovah God, and the Son is the mighty God. As a matter of fact, the word mighty God is *El Gabor*, which literally means God-man. That’s the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the Christmas story begins with the Trinity in Matthew chapter 1, verse 20. Speaking to Joseph, the angel said, “Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost—just underscore Holy Ghost—and she shall bring forth a son—underscore the word son—and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now, all this was done, that it might be fulfilled by the prophet, that spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Now, think of it. The Holy Spirit, the Son, the Father—God with us. You see that right in the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew. Friend, that’s on the front door.

And how does the Gospel of Matthew end? You know it—the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19 and 20. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations—now, listen—baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Now, you’re a thinking people. If Jesus is not God, that is sheer blasphemy for Him to put His name co-equal with God the Father. No, friend, I’m telling you that we see the Trinity of our Lord not only as a sacred mystery, but as a sovereign majesty.

III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity

But now let’s come to the third and final part of this message. I want you to see also not only the sacred mystery, and the sovereign majesty, but I want you to see what I’m going to call the saving ministry. Look in verse 4—John 1, verse 4: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Jesus has life. Now, you say, “Well, I have life.” No, not if you’re not saved. You have existence. You don’t have life until you know the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in Christ is there life. And then look, if you will—skip on down to verses 9 through 13: “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 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, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood—that is, of the flesh—nor the will—not of earthly parentage—nor of the will of the flesh—that is, not by your own determination—or of the will of man, but of God.” Now, what’s all of this saying? Well, we’re talking not only about the sacred mystery, and the sovereign majesty, but the saving ministry of the Trinity. You see, apart from the Holy Trinity there’s no way that you could be saved. He is the light. He is sent that we might believe on Him and receive Him.

Now, for our final scripture this morning, I would like for you just to leave the Gospel of John, and I want you to go to Ephesians chapter 1, and I want to delineate a little

further the saving ministry of the Trinity. Now, look, if you will, in Ephesians 1, verse 3. And what I'm going to show you in this scripture is that you were selected by the Father. Listen to this: "Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Do you know why you chose Him? Because He chose you. Before the foundation of the world, He determined that He was going to have a group of believers like we are, selected by the Father. You can say, thank God, He chose me. I guarantee you, if He hadn't chosen you, you never would have chosen Him. You're selected by the Father.

Now, secondly, you're saved by the Son. Look, if you will now, in Ephesians 1, verses 6 and 7. God does this, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved"—who is the beloved? Jesus. How are we accepted? In the beloved, in Jesus—"in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." That's so wonderful. You see, we're saved by the Son, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace. Grace means you don't earn it. Salvation is not for sale. You can't get it by layaway. You can't get it on credit. It's never going to be marked down. It is the forgiveness of sins by the riches of his grace. In the Old Testament, they had a ceremony that typified this and portrayed this.

They would take two goats and they were called scapegoats. And the high priest would kill one of the goats and sprinkle his blood upon the altar. Then he would take that blood and put it on the head of the other goat, and that other goat would be led away in the wilderness, never to return. And that's what forgiveness is. Through the blood of Jesus our sins are taken away, never ever, ever, ever to return.

Listen. We are selected by the Father. We are saved by the Son. And then, we are sealed by the Spirit. Look again, if you will now, back in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 13 and 14: "In whom ye also trusted—that is Jesus. You trusted Him—after that ye heard the word of truth, the good news—or the gospel—of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest—that is, the down-payment—of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory." Sealed with the Holy Spirit. That's one reason that I believe in eternal security: because we're sealed with the Holy Spirit.

God put Noah in the ark. And the Bible says that God shut the door. That ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. God put Noah in there. God sealed him in there. And that kept Noah in and kept the water out. Now, Noah wasn't holding onto that ark; he was inside that ark, and he was sealed inside that ark. Do you believe that? Get it? Good. Now, he is inside the ark and he is sealed. He is shut in.

Now, when you think of a seal, don't think of an animal that performs in the circus, or don't think of the transmission in your car that has a seal. This is a legal document. And in Bible times, and in our time, when a transaction takes place, there is a stamp, a seal. The Bible says, "The king's seal can no man break." It implies a transfer of ownership. It implies security. And once you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you're sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. You know, if He didn't seal me in, I never would make it. There are some of you who are here today who think, you know, I'm just afraid I'd fall away. Well, go back to Noah. Listen. Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he couldn't fall out of it—amen?—because God shut him in!

Conclusion

Now, what I'm trying to tell you is this: the Trinity is a sacred mystery. You can't understand it, but you'd better believe it. And it speaks of a sovereign majesty—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. They're all God. Not three gods; one God revealing Himself in three persons, and the saving ministry of the Spirit. There is the selection by the Father, salvation by the Son, and the sealing by the Spirit.

What child is this? God in human flesh! That's who He is. This is the basic doctrine of the church. And in these last days that is a doctrine, I believe, that needs to be preached more than any other, except salvation by grace. Just who is God? We worship a triune God. I don't want you to miss Him. I don't want you to die and go to hell apart from knowing Jesus, and there's no need that you should, for as Jesus said, "Come unto me, all of those of you who labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest."

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you really want to know God personally, I'm going to guide you in this prayer. And if you do know Him, and are sure you know Him, I want you to pray for others, that they might come to know Him today. Would you pray this prayer: Dear God, I need You. I have failed in my life, and I'm in darkness. I need to see the light. And in order to see the light, I need sight. Open my eyes to Your truth. Come into my life. Forgive my sin, and save me. Jesus, You shed Your blood on the cross to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe You died for me and with Your blood You paid my sin debt. I believe that God raised You from the dead. I believe You're the Son of God. And right now, with a childlike faith, I open my heart and receive You into my life to take control of my life, and I yield my life back to You for You to make me what You want me to be. Why don't you just put that in a sentence and pray, Save me, Lord Jesus? Pray it and mean it from the depth of your heart—save me, Lord Jesus. Pray it. Mean it. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, I want you to thank Him and say, Thank You, Jesus for saving me. I don't deserve it, but I receive it by faith.

You're my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my King forever and ever. Thank You. Thank You that You selected me. Thank You that You saved me. Thank You that You sealed me, blessed Holy Spirit, blessed Lord Jesus, blessed God the Father. And give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. "Pastor Rogers, why did you put that prayer at the end—give me the courage to make it public?" Because that's God's plan. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Coming forward in a service can't save anybody, but what it indicates is what saves you—that you're not ashamed of Jesus. And Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me and of 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." But Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father."

Now, there will be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles to welcome and receive those of you who'll be coming forward this morning to acknowledge Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. How wonderful! If you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister standing by that banner that says Redeemer in that corner or this one over here that says Messiah. And you just make your way that way. Those of you on the ground floor who'll be coming forward, you just come this way. Now, in just a moment, our ministers will come and stand in their place, and we're going to sing, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive: Lord, I confess You now." And when we sing that, I want you to come.

You say, "Pastor, I've never done that. How do you do it? What would I say?" Well, if you can say it and mean it, you just tell the man, "I am trusting Jesus," and we'll take it from there. We'll rejoice, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in prayer. We will treat you honestly and we will treat you courteously, and you will be blessed this morning to come and say yes to Jesus Christ.

Now, maybe you've already been saved. Maybe you didn't just pray that prayer with me this morning. Maybe at a stoplight, maybe at your desk, maybe when you were taking a walk, maybe when you were doing dishes, the Spirit of God spoke to you, and you said, "Lord Jesus, come into my life." Well, if you really did that, prove that you mean it by acknowledging Him. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." And you need to come along with these others who may have prayed this morning, and say, "I'm saved."

Now, you may also be a church member of another church, a baptized believer, but this is where you worship. We're going to ask you to come today and say, "I want to place my membership here," if you believe as we believe and want to be a loyal, faithful member of this church. We're not looking for mere joiners. This is a church, not a club, so you must mean business. If you want to be a member, you step out and come. And

what do you say? You say, “I want to place my membership here.”

And if you haven't been baptized as we understand it, we would want the privilege and the joy of baptizing you also as a believer in Jesus Christ.

Let's stand for prayer. Bow your heads in prayer. Children of God, if you're already certain of your own salvation, be praying for these others who need to confess Christ. Lord God, I pray now that You, heavenly Father, will give these who've prayed the courage to step forward and say yes to Jesus. Help boys and girls to come this morning. Help young people, married people, elderly people, O God, to say yes to Jesus. Lord, this is Your work. Draw people to You. Lord, I ask in Your holy, wonderful name. Amen.

As soon as we start to sing, you step out and come.

Jesus, the Light of the World

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 17, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 1:1–9

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

JOHN 1:4

Outline

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Introduction

Praise the Lord! Would you be finding John chapter 1? When you’ve found it, look up here—John chapter 1.

I want to tell you an interesting story, and, really, a very sad story. Back in World War II, in the North Atlantic, there was an aircraft carrier that was in danger from enemy submarines. And they sent out five of their finest airplanes with five of their finest pilots to scout out and to see if they could spot the enemy submarines. It was nighttime. The captain of that aircraft carrier realized he was in grave danger, and gave this commandment. He said, “Every light on this ship is to be extinguished. There is to be a total black out.” Those five pilots that had gone out to reconnoiter to try to find those enemy submarines finally came back. And they radioed to that aircraft carrier. They said, “We’re coming home. Give us some light to land by.” The radio operator said, “I’m sorry. There’s a total blackout. We cannot give you light.” Another of those pilots radioed in, and said, “Just give us some light, and we’ll land.” Again, the order came back, “It is total blackout. We cannot give you some light.” In desperation, one of the pilots radioed in, and said, “Give us just one light to help us find our way home.” The radio dispatcher there aboard that aircraft carrier with a broken heart said, “I can give

you no light,” and shut off the switch. Five brave American pilots, five of America’s best, went down in the blackness to the chilly waters of the North Atlantic and out into eternity.

Now I want you to keep that story in mind as I read to you from the Gospel of John, beginning in verse 1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life;”—now, listen to this—“and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was”—that is, John—“not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* (John 1:1–9)

I want to talk to you today about “Jesus, the Light of the World”—“Jesus, the Light of the World.” Like those pilots, we’re in a desperate condition; but, thank God, there is light. Light has come into the world. Light came to the world in Bethlehem. I was thinking this past week of the scriptures, the Christmas passages, that tell that Jesus is the Light of the World. Just put these in the margin there. Don’t look them up, but just write them down. In Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 2, Isaiah, looking forward to that time when our Lord and Savior would be born in Bethlehem, said, *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”* (Isaiah 9:2) And that light, of course, Isaiah goes on to tell us, in the sixth verse of that same chapter, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”* (Isaiah 9:6) That child is the light that Isaiah was prophesying about.

Zacharias, who was the father of John the Baptist, anticipated the coming of the Savior into the world. And he said in Luke chapter 1, verses 78 and 79, *“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,”—“the dayspring from on high”: that’s another word to describe the Lord Jesus—“to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”* (Luke 1:78–79)

Simeon, that dear old man of God, picked up the baby Jesus, to bless the baby Jesus. And here’s what Simeon said. In Luke chapter 2, verse 28, the Bible says, *“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...”—now he’s holding the baby Jesus, and this is what he says—“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.”* (Luke 2:28–32)

Christmas is about light. Jesus is the light of the world. We love to sing “Silent Night,

Holy Night,” but “Silent Night, Holy Night” is not about the night. It is about the light. And one stanza says,

*Silent night, holy night!
Darkness flies and all is light!*

—JOSEF MOHR

It’s not about the night. It’s about the light. We sing “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” and a part of that is,

*Hail the heav’nly Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris’n with healing in his wings.*

—CHARLES WESLEY

Light is come into the world, John tells us, in the third chapter of John. I want you to notice with me, as we think about “Jesus, the Light of the World,” five things about Him—five things about His wonderful, glorious light.

I. The Purity of the Light

The first thing I want you to notice is the purity of that light—the purity of that light. Now the Bible says the light was in the world. Jesus was in the world; but, friend, He was not of the world. In the natural world, there is nothing as pure as sunlight, nothing as pure, really, as any kind of light. Let me tell you something about light. Light can never be defiled. Listen to me. Light can never be corrupted, no matter what it passes through, or no matter what it falls upon. Light can never be defiled. It can never be sullied. It can never be corrupted. You can let light fall on the most corruptible, putrefying, vile, loathsome, disease-ridden object or subject, and yet the light is not touched by it at all. It can expose it, but it’s not touched by it.

Now, you take water from the purest spring, and it might be pure water, but, as it bubbles up and begins to flow away, it gets contaminated. But not with light. You can take snow—crystal pure—let it fall from heaven, but before long, that snow will be corrupt. But not light—not light: light can never be defiled. And, therefore, light is a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was in this world. Jesus, the Light of the World, He exposed sin, but He was never contaminated by sin. Jesus could touch sinners, but sin never touched Jesus.

Now, you think about it. He’s absolutely, totally undefiled. And so I love the picture of light. When the Bible calls Christ the Light of the World, It reminds me of the sinless, stainless purity of the Son of God. Jesus was the only One who ever lived who could look others in the face and say, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” (John 8:46) I wouldn’t say that to my friends, much less to my enemies. But Jesus was absolutely

pure, absolutely sinless. Light is come into the world. He was in the world, but He was not of the world. He was there to expose sin, but He was never contaminated by sin. So, when you think of Jesus as the Light of the World, the first thing I want you to think about is His uncorruptible purity. Have you got that?

II. The Constancy of the Light

Now, here's the second thing I want you to think about when you think about Jesus as the Light of the World: not only His purity, but His constancy. You see, there's one thing about light. Light is constant. The first verse here tell us that, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (John 1:1) Now Jesus is God; and, being God, He never changes. God cannot change. How could God change? He couldn't get better, and He surely won't get worse. He's God. He's absolutely unchangeable. He says, *"I am the LORD, I change not."* (Malachi 3:6) And, you see, light is constant. Light does not change.

Let me give you a verse to put in your margin—James 1, verse 17. The Bible speaks of Jesus and God the Father as light that's unchanging, and it says, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness."* (James 1:17) What does that mean? There is no change.

Now Einstein came up with the theory of relativity. And it's an incredible thing. Few men other than Einstein and myself understand it, the theory of relativity. $E = mc^2$: that simply means that the energy of any given object equals its mass times the speed of light squared. Doesn't that make perfect sense? Now E stands for energy in ergs. M stands for mass in grams. That's why it's called M . And C stands for the velocity of light in centimeters per second. Now what this all means is that a small amount of mass is able to produce a tremendous amount of energy—that is, for example, in nuclear fission. Now Einstein said this, and I want you to listen to it. He said the reason that he was able to construct and write down the theory of relativity is because there is one thing, and one alone, in the world that is constant and cannot change. It's the speed of light—the speed of light—186,282 miles per second. He says that's constant. Everything else is relative. The only thing that is constant in our universe is light. And Jesus, in the spiritual realm, is the one constant. He is light, and He does not change.

Now, let me illustrate the constancy of light and relativity. If I get in my automobile out here on Interstate 40, and I'm driving at fifty miles an hour this way; and you're in your automobile, and you're driving at fifty miles this way; when we pass each other, the relative speed is what? One hundred miles an hour. That's relative speed. I'm going fifty. You're going fifty. That's the relative speed. Now, if I'm going fifty, and you pull up alongside of me, and you're going sixty, then, relatively, to me, you're going ten miles an hour. That's your relative speed to my speed, you see? Everything there is, is

relative.

But now, suppose I hijack a light beam, and I'm on a light beam. I've got that thing saddled, and so I'm traveling now at 186,282 miles per second. That's fast. That's around the world seven times in one second. I'm traveling that way. I am traveling at the speed of light. Now, let's suppose you get a light beam, and you're going the opposite direction. You're traveling 186,282 miles a second. You're going this way, and I'm going that way. We pass. How do we pass? We pass at the speed of light. Now, is the relative speed double? No. It's constant. You don't double that. It doesn't change. Relatively, it's not twice 186,000 miles per second. The thing that changes then is not speed, but time—time. You see? The faster you get to the speed of light, the more time slows down. And if you were to achieve the speed of light, time would stand still.

Now, think about it. One day, we're going to achieve the speed of light. I mean, God is light. Christ is light. One day, we're going to be made just like the Lord Jesus. You know, right now, the Bible says, "He dwells in light that no man can approach unto." (1 Timothy 6:16) But one day, when we see Him, we'll be like Him. We'll be transformed into His perfect image. And for us time will stand still. We'll be in eternity. Time will stand still. We will have gone from time to eternity, because we are like the Lord Jesus Christ.

But think about those in hell. For them, time slows down. They're in darkness. Through the eons of the ages—endless, timeless, dateless, measureless—they're in hell. And the Bible says, "*They have no rest day nor night,*" (Revelation 14:11) those who are away from our Lord. You see? He is constant. The speed of light is constant, and it tells us of the Lord Jesus, not only because of the purity of that light, but the constancy of that light. Let me give you two verses. Malachi chapter 3, verse 6: "*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*" (Malachi 3:6) Let me give you another one—Hebrews 13, verse 8: "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*" (Hebrews 13:8) In a world of change, isn't it wonderful there's One who will not change? And His name is Jesus. He's the Light of the World.

I heard a preacher preach a while back, and he said something that just tickled me all over. He said, "You can't make God nervous." I love that. Oh, there's no panic in heaven. Friend, He does not change, and He sees the beginning from the end. We sing it, Brother Jim:

*Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;*

...

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

—THOMAS O. CHISHOLM

III. The Victory of the Light

But I want you to think about a third thing about this light. I want you to think not only about the purity of it—Jesus Christ, absolutely pure, cannot be defiled; He can touch sin, but sin cannot touch Him; He can expose sin, but sin cannot defile Him—think of the constancy of this light—He never changes—the third thing I want you to think about—I’m so grateful that He is described as light, that little baby that was born—and that’s not only the purity of that light, and the constancy of that light, but the victory of that light—the victory of that light. Look, if you will, in verses 3 through 5: *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”* (John 1:3–5)

Now, what does that mean? Does it mean the darkness didn’t understand the light? That’s the way we would think that’s what the normal meaning of *“the darkness comprehended it not”* would be. But I looked this up in a number of different translations yesterday, and here are three that I want to share with you: “The darkness has not overcome it: Here’s another: “The darkness cannot put it out.” Here’s another translation: “The darkness can never extinguish it.” What it’s talking about here is the victory of this light. Here’s the history of a battle between light and darkness. That’s what it’s all about. Everything—there’s a battle between light and darkness.

Satan, his name is Lucifer. It means light bearer. But Satan turned against God, and sinned against the light, and now no longer is he the light bearer—Lucifer, the son of the morning—He is now become Satan, the father of the night. And there’s a darkness—a dark, devilish darkness—that is at battle with the light.

I want to ask you a question: Who must win? As night follows day, and day follows night, it is as clear as the light of the noonday sun: darkness has no power against light. Now, you think about it. Darkness has absolutely no power against light. It is totally powerless against the light. If you’re in a dark room, and you want to get the darkness out, how would you get the darkness out? Could you take a vacuum cleaner and suck it out? Could you take a shovel and shovel it out? Could you take a broom and sweep it out? How would you get the darkness out of that room? Turn on the light. Now, when you turn on the light, where does the darkness go? It flees. It goes under the bed. It goes in the closet. It goes out. It cannot stay. It is totally powerless against the light. Say *amen*. I want you to think about it. You say, “That’s a simple thought.” It’s a glorious thought! It’s a glorious thought! The darkness can’t put out the light. Light has come into the world. That’s the whole thing.

You think of the sun—how bright the sun is, incredibly bright! I’m talking about the sun—in the natural world, so powerful! The energy on the sun is indescribable. The sun radiates more energy in one second than man has used in the history of civilization, or

ever will use. Four million tons of hydrogen are destroyed every second in a nuclear explosion on the sun. Four million tons of nuclear bombs are going off every second on the sun. On the brightest moonlit night, the light of the moon is only one eight hundred thousandth as bright as an ordinary sun-shiny day. To look into the face of the sun is to put your eyes out. But that's only a faint illustration of the Son of God and His brightness.

The Bible tells us in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 16—it speaks of our Lord, “*who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.*” (1 Timothy 6:16) We put a man on the moon. Friend, we'll never put one on the sun. But that is only an illustration of the glory, the power, of our great God. It's the victory of this light.

Now, let me tell you something about this light. Every now and then, in the natural world, we say, “Well, the sun didn't shine today.” That's a lie, isn't it? If you've ever ridden in an airplane, you know better than that. Are you kidding? An overcast, foggy, clammy, cold day, and you get on that plane, and it bumps a little bit, and all of a sudden, *poof*. You know, it's dazzling bright. Down beneath are all the clouds. The sun's been shining.

And, friend, I want to tell you something. You can block out the light, but you can't put it out. You can't put it out. I mean, there is victory; and rather than praying so much against the powers of darkness, what we need to be doing is realizing the power of light. What we need to be doing is to release the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to bear witness of that light. Think of Jesus, the Light of the World. Think of His purity. Think of His constancy. Think of His victory. The darkness can't put out the light. Friend, you can walk in a room and turn on the light, but you cannot walk in one and turn on the darkness. The only thing that can let the darkness in is for the light to be blocked out.

IV. The Vitality of the Light

Now, here's a fourth thing I want you to notice about Jesus, the Light of the world. I hope this will bless you as much as all this has blessed me when I studied it. But you think about His purity. He cannot be defiled. He can expose, but He cannot be defiled. He's in the world, but not of the world. Think about His constancy. He never changes. Think, friend, about His victory. The darkness can never extinguish the light. And then, think with me about His vitality. He is the One who gives life.

Now, look, if you will, here in this same passage of Scripture, in verse 4: “*In him...*”—that is, in Jesus, in Bethlehem's babe—“*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*” (John 1:4) That's the vitality—the vitality of this light. Light and life are inextricably interwoven. You cannot have life unless you have light. When God wanted to bring light, or life, to a chaos, and make it a cosmos. In Genesis 1, He said, “*Let there be light.*” (Genesis 1:3) And when the light came, the seas began to swarm with life, and the trees

and the seeds began to bud and blossom and grow.

I've always loved natural science, and I can remember back in the fourth grade the first big word that I ever really locked in on, that enthralled me when my teacher told me about it, was the word *photosynthesis*. Do you remember studying that word, *photosynthesis*? And the teacher told us there in that class—I was amazed; I was enthralled by it—she said, “The word *photo* means ‘light,’ and *synthesis* means ‘to put together.’ And,” she said, “growing things are put together with light: *photosynthesis*.”

Now light causes these plants to produce chlorophyll, and the whole life chain is built upon the sunlight. If you were to take the sunlight away from this world, our world would become cold and dark and dead. It's like a man without Jesus. He's cold and dark and dead. When Jesus comes into the world, *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”*

Oh, friend, that's the vitality of this life. You want your life put back together? It will be put back together with light. There is a divine photosynthesis when “the entrance of thy Word brings light.” (Psalm 119:130) And Jesus is the light; and your cold, dark, dead, clammy world will be put back together when the glorious light of the Son of God shines into your heart. Thank God, there will be a sunrise of the soul. Jesus said, “I've come that you might have life, that you might have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

There's no life without light. When Adam sinned, what happened in the Garden of Eden? God was living in Adam; but when Adam sinned, the Lord went out; and when the Lord went out, the life went out; and when the life went out, the light went out. So, when the Lord went out, he's depraved; and when the light—the life—went out, he's dead; and when the light went out, he's darkened. When you get saved, the Lord comes back in, turns the light on, the life begins again. Jesus is the Light of the World. That little babe in Bethlehem turned the light on and gave us a place to land. “Just give us one light.” Well, God has, my friend. He has.

V. The Glory of the Light

There's one other thing I want you to see, and I'll be finished. I want you to think not only of the vitality of this light, but I want you to think now of the glory of this light—the glory of it. Look, if you will, in verse 14 now: *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14) Do you know what glory is? That's the outshining of the light of His grace and truth. It's the Shekinah. It's the light of God that's in the Jesus Christ. Oh, the glory of this light!

Now we have lights in this building. This is artificial illumination. Thank God for it—but it can never match the purity of sunlight. How much greater is the purity of the light of the Lord Jesus! Did you know that there is a spectrum? There are seven colors that

comprise the spectrum of light. All light is made up of color. There are seven colors in the spectrum. And what do they remind us of? Jesus, the Light of the World, who is what? Absolutely perfect! God is perfect. And so this light with seven colors, the spectrum, reminds us of the perfection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But put all of those together, and the color is pure white—pure white—which speaks of the holiness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now what we need to understand is that color is in light. Objects don't have any color of themselves. The color is in the light. Did you know that? That anything that you wear, anything that you have... You say, "Well, this lady down here has on a red coat." No. She has a coat that picks up red out of the light. The color is not in the coat. The color is in the light. The most gorgeous bouquet in the world, if you take away the light, it has no color. There is no color. You don't turn on the light so you can see the color. The color is not there without the light. The color is in the light. Jesus is the One that makes everything glorious, and then He helps us to see what He's made glorious. He is the glory of God. Friend, Christ is the One who gives glory and joy and victory. He's the One who makes this world beautiful in His time. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

I feel sorry for people who've never seen the light. You don't know the beauties that I know. I don't know how to say what I'm about to say. It's not in my notes, but I'll tell you something, friend. If you don't know Jesus, I know something you don't know, and I see things you don't see—and they're wonderful. Now you may be a Christian and not see them because you're in the twilight zone—I mean, you're walking in carnality. Oh, *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7) Oh, the glory of that light! Oh, the multifaceted splendors! He is everything in the spectrum put together. And He is the One that makes all things beautiful. The glory of that light! The Light of the World is Jesus.

Conclusion

Now I'm finished, but let me say this. The sad thing is this: that many neglect or refuse that light. Look again in verses 9 and following: *"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* You want to be saved? He's there for you, friend. But notice this: *"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* (John 1:9–12)

Why do some men blot out the light? Why will not some people receive the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, let me tell you something here. Turn with me to John chapter 3 for just a moment. Look in verse 16: *"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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” God doesn’t want you to go to hell. If you go to hell, you’ll have to trample over the bloodstained cross of Jesus to get there. “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. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” (John 3:16–20)

That’s it. You say, “Pastor, I just don’t see it.” That’s right. You don’t see it, because you’re blind. But a blind man would be a foolish person to deny the light because he can’t see it. And the reason that some can’t see is they don’t want to see. They can’t find God for the same reason a thief can’t find a policeman. If you want Him, I’m here to tell you—look at me and listen to me—light is come into the world. Light was born in Bethlehem. His name is Jesus. He’s the Light of the World. And I’ll tell you right now, if you’ll open your heart and receive Him as the Lord Jesus Christ, He will pull back the veil of darkness, pin it with a star of hope, and flood your world with the sunlight. And you will see things and know things that you could never know without Him. And He’ll never leave you nor forsake you, because He changes not.

The Mystery of the Manger

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 12, 1982

Main Scripture Text: John 1:1–3, 11–14

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

JOHN 1:14

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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of John the first chapter. Today, in keeping with Christmas season, I want to speak to you on this subject: “The Mystery of the Manger”—“The Mystery of the Manger.” We’re going to begin reading in John chapter 1 with the first verse, and read some selected verses through verse 14. The Gospel of John chapter 1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him”—*that is, without the Word—*“was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:1–3) Then, skip to verse 11, if you will: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him”—*that is, the Word—*“to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:11–14)

Now the Apostle John is not a wordy man. As a matter of fact, he has a very small vocabulary in the Gospel of John, and he uses a very few words and very simple words.

And many of the things that Matthew, Mark, and Luke write about, John doesn't write about. We don't find any genealogy of Christ in John's Gospel. We don't find anything about His nativity. There's no Bethlehem story, no manger, in the Gospel of John. We don't find anything about the boyhood of Christ in the Gospel of John. We don't find anything about the wilderness temptation in the Gospel of John. And John doesn't even give us any of the parables of Jesus. It is because John, though he is not a wordy writer, is a weighty writer, and John is zeroing in on a very special purpose. He tells us in John chapter 20 and verse 31, *"These [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of [the living] God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"*—*"these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."* (John 20:31) Are you interested in life? Are you? Then, pay attention, folks, because this is for you.

Now, there are three things that John tells us about the Lord Jesus—of course, many others, but three things from the scriptures that I have read to you today—that I want to speak to you about, and help you to understand something of the meaning of Christmas and "The Mystery of the Manger."

I. The Sovereign Majesty of Jesus' Deity

First of all, I want you to notice that John mentions and points out the sovereign majesty of Jesus's deity. When he speaks of Jesus, he speaks of the sovereign majesty of His deity. Look in verses 1 and 2: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."* (John 1:1–2) Now the Greek noun that we translate "Word" is the Greek word *logos*, and that's what John is calling Jesus. *"In the beginning was the [Logos]"*—"the Word" (John 1:1)—translated from the Greek to the English "Word."

Well, why does John call Jesus "the Word"? Well, a word is an expression of an invisible thought. Now, you see, you cannot see my thoughts, but you can hear my words as they are in flesh. Suppose I just stood up here this morning, and, rather than preaching, just stood up here and thought, and I just had all kinds of thoughts. What good is that going to do you, if you don't hear my thoughts? You see, dear friend, a word is the expression of an invisible thought, of an invisible idea, of an invisible truth, of an invisible reality. And Jesus Christ is the expression of the invisible God; and so He is called "the Word" here in John 1:1.

Now John is going to tell us in just a moment that that Word, Jesus Christ, is God—John is about to tell us that Jesus Christ is God. And let me tell you who John was. John was a Palestinian Jew, and he had built into him a horror and abhorrence against idolatry and against blasphemy. Understand who was saying that Jesus is God. And I'm going to tell you something else. He's not saying this as a young man; he's saying this

as an old man. This is the aged apostle writing some forty, fifty, to sixty years later, after he first discovered this truth. And now as a mature man, he has the unshakable conviction that Jesus Christ is God. And I want you to look at these verses and see what he says about the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Jesus Is Eternally God

First of all, he says that Jesus is eternally God. Look at that word: *“In the beginning”*—*“In the beginning”*—*“was the Word.”* (John 1:1) When the beginning got here, the Word was already here. *“In the beginning was the Word.”* That is, before there was anything, before there was any creation, before there were any worlds, before there was any space, before there was anything, there was the Word. *“In the beginning was the Word.”* The verb *was* is in the imperfect tense. That does not speak of past action that is accomplished, but something that goes on and on and on—something that is continuing. And I want to tell you, dear friend, when you start with Jesus—are you paying attention?—when you start with Jesus, you don’t start with Mary. When you start with Jesus, you do not start with the manger. When you start with Jesus, you go into eternity past. There never was a time when Jesus was not—never was a time when Jesus was not.

Now what John is talking about here when he’s speaking about the Lord Jesus, and he’s talking about the past, he’s not talking about a start; he’s talking about a state. *“In the beginning was the Word.”* Back in the timeless, endless, beginningless past, there was the Lord Jesus Christ in a dimension where time does not count. And what the aged Apostle John is saying about the Lord Jesus Christ is, He never had a beginning; He is eternally God. *“In the beginning was the Word.”*

B. Jesus Is Equally God

The second thing he says about Jesus: not only is He eternally God; He is equally God. Look at it again: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”* (John 1:1) Now you say, “Wait a minute, pastor. A moment ago, you said the Word was God. And now you’re saying the Word is with God? Now, tell me—just answer yes or no: Was He with God, or was He God?” The answer is yes, yes, yes. He was God, and He was with God. You say, “Well, you’ve got more than one God.” Oh, no. We worship one God, who has eternally revealed Himself as three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And this is one God, who has revealed Himself as a triune God.

We see this back in the beginning of creation when God created man. The Bible says, *“And God...”*—and the word there is *Elohim*, which is a plural noun—*“And God said, Let us make man in our image.”* (Genesis 1:26) Now, look. God said, *“Let us make man...”* Well, now wait a minute. God—singular: *“Let us make man in our image.”* That

is, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit said, *“Let us make man in our image.”* And therefore the image of man and the image of God is a triune person. I’m just one person standing up here, but I’m body, soul, and spirit. And each part of my nature is different, and yet all of my nature makes the whole—the person that you see here today: body, soul, and spirit. I’m not three; I’m one. I’m made in the image of a triune God.

As a matter of fact, all that God has made reflects His triune nature. All that we know in this physical, material universe is time and space, right? Let’s look at space. Space is three-dimensional. Look at the triplets that God has put into the world. Space is height, space is width, and space is depth. Now, dear friend, height is not width. Width is not depth. Depth is not height. Each is distinctive; yet all are part of the same, and none can exist without the other. Or, let’s put it a different way. Let’s think about time. What is time made of? Past, present, future. Now you cannot have a present without a past, and you cannot have a past without a future. And the future is not the present; and the present is not the past; and the past is not the future. All are part of the same time. One cannot exist without the other; and yet each is distinct and different. These are only faint reflections of the triune nature of the great God of the universe.

And so the Bible says, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”* (John 1:1) He is equally God. You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I don’t believe I fully understand that.” Well, I’m glad you don’t, because I don’t either, and that makes us feel—it makes me feel—better. As a matter of fact, you don’t have to understand anything before you enjoy it. Dr. Havner said, “I don’t understand electricity, but I’m not going to sit in the dark until I do.” Amen? Somebody has said, concerning the Trinity, “Define it, you lose your mind; deny it, you lose your soul.” Listen, friend. There are some things we just simply know by revelation. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”* And Jesus is equally God, and that’s the reason the Apostle Paul said He *“thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”* (Philippians 2:6)

C. Jesus Is Essentially God

But not only is the Lord Jesus eternally God; and not only is the Lord Jesus equally God; but therefore the Lord Jesus is essentially God. Look at that verse again: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”*—black print on white paper—*“the Word was God.”* (John 1:1) And remember that word *was* is in the imperfect tense. That means “continues to be” God. And what I mean by that is He is essentially God. All that God is, He is. All that God has, He has. All that God does or can do, He does and can do. John explains that as we go on in verse 3—look at it: *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:3) Without the Word, without Jesus, without the *logos*, was not

anything made that was made. You pick up your Bible, and begin in Genesis 1:1, and you read, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* But yet you read here in John 1:3: *“Without [Jesus] was not any thing made that was made.”* And Paul tells us in Colossians all things were made by Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16) Jesus is the Creator of it all. My dear friend, Jesus is essentially God.

And if you were to take the telescope and turn it out to the stellar reaches of space, and travel at the speed of light—that is, if you were to travel at six million million miles a year or at 186,000 miles per second, like that, you would go out through the universe, and you would see stars strewn like sand upon the velvet blackness of the night. And you would go on and on and on, and recede further and further and further back into the past, traveling at the speed of light, billions of years into the past. And when you get to the beginning of it all, there’s Jesus Christ. *“Without him was not any thing made that was made.”*

Or, if you were to take a microscope and begin to scrutinize the minute things of this world, and look in one of those little atoms—an atom—do you know how small an atom is? You could lay 150 million of them side by side on an inch—an atom. And in that atom is like a miniature solar system. There’s a nucleus with electrons flashing around it like planets in orbit, moving at inconceivable speeds, filled with unbelievable power. And there is more space inside that atom, relatively, than there is between the stars in our universe. And there in that atom, so small, so minute, you have to say, behind it all is Jesus Christ.

I was reading that if you were to take the molecules in a drop of water—the molecules in one drop of water—and turn each molecule into a grain of sand, you would have enough sand to build a superhighway one-half mile wide, one foot deep, from New York to San Francisco—enough sand to make the concrete in one drop of water. There are that many molecules in one drop of water.

Who was it that flung the stars into space? Who was it that put the electrons in the molecule? Who is it in the electrons, in the atoms, and the molecules in that drop of water? *“Without him”*—without Jesus—*“was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:3) Friend, I want to tell you that *the baby in Bethlehem is the mighty God in Genesis*—and never forget it. He is eternally God. He is equally God. He is essentially God. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:1–3)

Let me give you some other scriptures just to jot down in case one of these emissaries from hell comes knocking on your door that tries to tell you that Jesus Christ is less than God. Let me give you this one—Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 8: *“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”* (Hebrews 1:8) You get that? *“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”* Jot this one down:

Titus 2:13. It speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and it says we're to be "*looking for...the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*"—"*looking for...the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*" And then, jot this one down: John chapter 20 and verse 28, where Thomas, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, has finally seen the resurrected Jesus in His resurrected body. And Thomas sees the nail prints in the hands of Jesus, and Thomas sees the mark of the spear in His riven side. And Thomas falls on his face and says, "*My LORD and my God.*" (John 20:28)

Now, suppose Bob Sorrell were to come and fall before me this morning, and say, "My Lord and my God." Do you know what I'd say to him? I'd say, "Buddy, get up, or we'll both be in trouble." Amen? He'd be in trouble for saying it; I'd be in trouble for letting him say it.

You know, there are some of the liberals, and the modernists, and so forth, who do not believe in the full deity of Jesus Christ. They say, "Well, He wasn't God; but He was good man." Friend, listen. If He were not God, He wasn't a good man. He was a knave, a fake, a fraud, an imposter, a charlatan. Anybody who lets some other man fall in front of him and say, "My Lord and my God," and not rebuke him—when blasphemy and idolatry is the ultimate sin—how can you call him a good man? Either He was God, or He wasn't good. Jesus Christ Himself said, "*There is none good but one, that is, God.*" (Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:18) And if Jesus Christ is not God, Jesus Christ is not even good. As a matter of fact, He's receiving worship under false pretenses: aiding and abetting idolatry.

But the old, aged Apostle John says, "*In the beginning was the Word,*"—eternally God—"*and the Word was with God,*"—equally God—"*and the Word was God*" (John 1:1)—essentially God. And so the very first thing John tells us in his marvelous book, this Gospel of John, John speaks to us of the sovereign majesty of His deity.

II. The Sublime Mastery of Jesus' Humanity

And then, secondly, John speaks to us of the sublime mystery of His humanity. Look in verse 14: "*And the Word*"—that is, the eternal God—"*was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14) The Word was translated into flesh. Now, when a word is in one language, it must be put into another language to be understood. And in order that we might understand what God is saying, God translated His Word into flesh. So many times in a translation, meaning is lost. But no meaning is lost here. Here is a perfect translation. Here the Word is made flesh, and which dwells among us, that we might read it.

Look, if you will, in verse 18 of this same chapter: "*No man hath seen God at any*

time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18) That is, He has exegeted Him—He has translated Him—into our heart. We haven't seen Him, we can't know Him; but God has declared Him, because the Word is made flesh. And, "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.*" (Hebrews 1:1–2) Jesus Christ is God's full word and God's final word. And when He said, "Jesus," He's not going to say any more.

Friend, I want to tell you, He is the Word of God made flesh. And here is God's message to mankind. He is Jesus Christ. And so this is the mystery, dear friend, the sublime mystery of His humanity. Paul knew it was such a mystery. He says in 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, "*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.*" (1 Timothy 3:16) And what is the mystery? That God could translate this Word into human flesh; that Deity could take humanity, and nothing be lost in the translation.

Now, my dear friend, the Word is made flesh without denying the deity or distorting the humanity. He doesn't deny the deity; He does not distort the humanity. And in the God-man Jesus Christ is as much God as though He were not man at all. I told you this last week. And He's as much man as though He were not God at all. Do not get the idea that Jesus Christ is half-God and half-man. That would make Him a monstrosity. He was not. Don't get the idea that He was all God and not man, just masquerading as a man. Don't get the idea that He was man and not God. He was the God-man: as much God as though He were not man at all; as much man as though He were not God at all—very God of very God; very man of very man. And that's the reason the Apostle Paul says, "*Great is the mystery of godliness*"—and this is the reason that John is saying—oh, listen—"God was manifest in the flesh." The *logos* took on flesh.

Look at it again in verse 14: "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory...)*" And what is John saying? John is saying, that little babe in swaddling clothes that we read about in Luke 2 is the mighty God of Genesis 1. "*The Word was made flesh.*" (John 1:14) What John is saying is, that little toddler who learned to walk holding onto Mary's hand is the mighty God who swung the planets into space. "*The Word was made flesh.*" What John is saying is, that little boy who was playing in Joseph's carpenter shop, playing with the shavings and the sawdust, was the God who framed and designed and created a universe. What John is saying is, that young man in His strength, who bowed His head and died upon the cross, and before He did, said, "*I thirst,*" (John 19:28) was the God who created every drop of rain, the God who scooped out the oceans, the God who made every river to flow and run. "*The Word was made flesh.*"

You say, "Do you understand that?" No, I don't understand it. I can't comprehend

that. That, my friend, is a sublime mystery. *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”* (1 Timothy 3:16)

And John tells us something very beautiful. He says, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”* Look at that word *dwelt* there in verse 14. Actually, it means “to pitch a tent,” or, literally, it means “tabernacled.” *“The Word...[tabernacled with] us.”* Now, in the Old Testament, when the Jews were coming out of Egypt and going to Canaan, they needed a house of worship. So God told Moses, “Moses, I want you to build a house of worship.” It was called a tabernacle. And God said to Moses, “Moses, see that you make it exactly like I tell you to make it. You follow the blueprints, Moses. Make it exactly according to pattern”—because what that tabernacle was was a picture, a prophecy, a shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ. It spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, “Moses, be careful how you make it. This is not just any old tent. There’s a great lesson and a great symbolism in this tent.”

Now that tabernacle was covered on the outside with animal skins—badger’s skin—dull, grey, ugly, nothing beautiful to look at. And if you were to see the tabernacle sitting on the desert floor, it wouldn’t have been beautiful to look at. As a matter of fact, it would have looked something similar to almost any Bedouin’s tent. There it is, just a tent out there, just covered with these dull, drab, greyish-brown badgers’ skins.

But if you were to go inside the tabernacle, inside that tabernacle was fine linen exquisitely embroidered—white, scarlet, blue, purple—cherubim, fine needlework, millions of dollars worth of gold shimmering in that tabernacle, beautiful furniture. And there was a seven-pronged candlestick. We say a *candlestick*—actually, a lampstand, because a candle consumes itself, but this lampstand didn’t consume itself, because it’s fed with oil—olive oil—which is a type of the Holy Spirit. And it would send a radiant and a resplendent light on the inside of that tabernacle, and just shimmer on that gold and cause that embroidery and that fine, fine linen to be dazzling in its appearance. Not a window in the tabernacle, no outside light coming in: all the illumination is from within.

And the only people who could see that glory were those who came in through the door. There was just one door. And other people would walk by, and say, “Well, there’s another building. There’s another tent.” But to those who knew what was in it, and those who had been on the inside, they beheld the glory of it, and they knew what was in it.

Now, friend, I want to tell you something. The average man doesn’t understand who Jesus is, and he doesn’t understand why we get so excited about the Lord Jesus, and why He moves us so, and why we love Him so. And I do love Him. I’ll tell you why. If you see Jesus outwardly, you read His teachings, and you say, “Oh, He was a great teacher”—yes, He was—“a great man, perhaps.” You haven’t seen Jesus, friend. Listen. If Jesus Christ were to walk into this room, you’d say, “Oh, I’d recognize Him immediately.” Not in the days of His flesh, you wouldn’t. He was an ordinaryA looking

man. We romanticize the ideas of Jesus. He was an ordinary-looking man.

You say, “How can you be so certain?” Did you know not one person wrote a description of Jesus in the Bible? Wouldn’t you think that John would say, “Well, He was so tall, and He had this color hair, and so forth? He weighed so much”? Nobody ever says what He looked like. As a matter of fact, the one who comes the closest to describing Him is Isaiah the prophet; and Isaiah the prophet said, “And when we see Him, there is no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him.” (Isaiah 53:2) That is, He was very nondescript, very ordinary in His appearance, like that tabernacle, just covered with those badgers’ skins: nothing beautiful on the outside. But to those of us who’ve been on the inside, we’ve seen the King in His beauty, amen?

John says, “*We beheld his glory...*”—“We saw Him. We have seen Him from the inside, because we have been in Christ, and Christ is in us”—“*we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father.*” (John 1:14) And we sing that song:

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;

Hail th’incarnate Deity.

—CHARLES WESLEY

Outwardly, yes, the flesh; inwardly, the nature—the beauty—of God, the God-man. “*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)...*”—and John is saying, “We saw God walking and talking. We saw God laughing and teaching. We saw God eating and drinking. We saw God consulted and contradicted. We saw God hailed as Messiah. We saw Him nailed to the cross as a malefactor. We saw God buried. We saw God resurrected”—“*we beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:14) And John says, “I want you to see it, too. I want you to understand it, too”—“*But these [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing ye might have life through his name.*” (John 20:31)

III. The Saving Ministry of Jesus’ Nativity

And John speaks of the sovereign majesty of His deity. And then, John speaks of the sublime mystery of His humanity. Then, one other thing John tells us about: he talks about the saving ministry of His nativity—the saving ministry of His nativity. Why His nativity? Why was He born on Christmas Day? What’s the meaning of the mystery of the manger? Why should this God step out of glory? Why should the infinite become an infant? How could the mighty God be encompassed in a virgin’s womb? How? Why? What’s it all about? Well, look in verse 11—John explains it: “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him*”—that is, as many as received Jesus—“*to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the*

will of man, but of God.” (John 1:11–13)

Now, what is the saving ministry of His nativity? Why was He born of a virgin? I'll tell you why: that you might be born again. Why did He become a son of man? I'll tell you why: that you might become a son of God. Why did He come to earth? I'll tell you why: that you might go to heaven. That's what it's all about. You see, *“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”* You see, we're sinners—all of us. We're sinners by birth. We are sinners by nature. We are sinners by choice. And we're sinners by practice. And the Bible says, *“The wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) *“The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die.”* (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20)

The great, eternal, invisible God cannot die; but God can become a man and then die. And so Jesus became a man. He was born of a virgin. He came as He did—born of a virgin—to be what He was—sinless). He was what He was to do what He did—and that is to die. He did what He did to change what we are—that is, sinners—that we might become what He is—and that is a son of God. And so the Lord Jesus Christ came upon this earth, took upon Himself human flesh, died in agony and blood upon the cross. And John says, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,”* and, *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”*

And in verses 11 and 12, first of all, you have the greatest tragedy: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* Secondly, you have the greatest transaction: *“as many as received him.”* Thirdly, you have the greatest transformation: that they might become the children of God. Sinners like we are, vile, wicked, undone, we become the righteousness of Christ in God. What a transformation!

How does it take place? Look in verse 14—and I'll be finished. He's talking about a new birth—a new birth.

A. The New Birth Does Not Come by Blood

He talks about those of us who are born again, *“which were born, not of blood.”* (John 1:13) Do you know what that means? That means that you do not become a Christian because your parents were Christians. It doesn't come down through the bloodstream. He's not talking about the blood of Christ here. He's just simply saying that it is not in the genes and the chromosomes. Now, listen to me. God has millions of children, but He doesn't have one grandchild. You understand what I'm saying? Because your mother or daddy was a Christian does not make you a Christian. It is not of blood. You cannot inherit it.

B. The New Birth Does Not Come Through Generation

It is not of generation. I heard of a Baptist who was trying to make a Baptist out of a

Methodist. So they were having a religious argument, and the Baptist was trying to get this Methodist to become a Baptist. He said, “Now, why should I be a Baptist?” “Well,” he said, “why should you be a Methodist?” “Well,” he said, “I’ll tell you why I ought to be a Methodist.” He said, “My daddy was a Methodist, and his daddy was a Methodist—my grandfather—and my great-grandfather was Methodist.” Well, the Baptist didn’t think that was a very good argument. He said, “Well, I want to ask you a question.” He said, “If your daddy had been a fool, and your granddaddy had been a fool, and your great-granddaddy had been a fool, then what would that have made you?” “Oh,” he said, “well, I guess then I’d have been a Baptist.”

Friend, I want to tell you, your daddy can be a Baptist or a Methodist. It makes no difference. You’ve got to be born again—you’ve got to be born again. Religion never saved anybody. Jesus will save anybody who’ll trust Him.

C. The New Birth Does Not Come from Determination

It is not of blood: you cannot inherit it. God has no grandchildren: it is not by generation. Nor is it by determination. Look again in verse 13: “*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*” (John 1:13)—that is, human effort. Determination—good works—can’t do it. If you could be saved by being good, then tell me, why did Jesus Christ leave heaven, and come and die upon that cross? Why wouldn’t God just say, “Be good”?

Do you know what so many people think? They really believe this: they believe they’re going to be saved by their good works. They think that God is like Santa Claus. He’s making a list, checking it twice, going to find out who’s naughty or nice. And that’s what people actually believe—and that one of these days they’re going to die and come to the final judgment; and over here will be all your good works, and over here will be all your bad works; and He’s going to weigh them up, and if your good works outweigh your bad works, He’s going to say, “You made it”; and if your bad works outweigh your good works, He’s going to say, “You’re lost.” That’s what the average person thinks. But the Bible says it’s “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*” (Titus 3:5) “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” (Romans 4:5) And, my dear friend, this birth is not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh. It is not by generation, not of blood, not by determination, not the will of man. It is of God. It is regeneration.

Friend, when you repent of your sin, the same Lord Jesus who was born in Bethlehem is born in you, and you are born again. You become a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) You’re changed.

Don’t get the idea that a Christian is like a tadpole who turns into a frog. You see,

that just takes place gradually. A Christian is like a frog who's received the kiss of grace and becomes a prince. It is supernatural.

God just changes us from the inside. Oh, the inward change begins to work outward, and it takes months and years for the sanctification process to be completed. Indeed, it's not completed until we reach our Lord in glory. But, dear friend, He begins a good work in us when we trust Him. You're born again.

Conclusion

Have you been born again? Listen to me now. This is the mystery of the manger. This is the meaning of the manger. This is the miracle of the manger. He was born of a virgin that you might be born again. Are you born again? "Oh," you say, "well, that's not important." Friend, I'm not talking to you about something that is incidental; I'm talking to you about something fundamental. I'm not talking to you about something that is a nicety; I'm talking about a necessity. You see, there are two births, and two deaths: the first death is when your body dies; the second death is eternal hell. Now, if you are born but once, you die twice. If you're born twice, you can die but once. And if you are born but once and die twice, eventually you'll curse the day that you were born at all.

George Whitfield, a great preacher of yesteryear, used to preach on the new birth, and he always would use this text: "*Ye must be born again*"; "*Ye must be born again*"; "*Ye must be born again.*" (John 3:7) Someone asked him, "Mr. Whitfield, why do you always preach, 'You must be born again'?" He said, "Oh, I'll tell you why. It is because '*ye must be born again.*'" Amen?

Operation Andrew

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 29, 1978

Main Scripture Text: John 1:40–42; 6:5–11; 12:20–22

“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”

JOHN 1:40

Outline

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- I. Our Knowledge Makes Us Responsible
- II. Our Blessings Make Us Responsible
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Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight we want to be thinking together about this subject: “Operation Andrew.” You know by now that the Billy Graham Crusade is coming in just a matter of weeks. We’re praying that God is going to do something so very exciting and so very wonderful in our city—something that is real and something that is lasting, something that cannot be explained by the fact that Billy Graham came. We want something that cannot be explained by personality, or promotion, or propaganda, or anything else. We want it to be something that is unmistakably the work of God and something that will transform our city. We are in the need—the desperate need—in Memphis, as in every city in America and in the world, of a genuine spiritual awakening. And I believe with all my heart that such an awakening is possible, and I believe it will happen if you and I are willing to do what the Scriptures teach us that we ought to do and what we must do.

I want to look at some scriptures with me tonight before we talk a little bit about Operation Andrew and what it is. First of all, I want you to notice in John chapter 1, verses 40 through 42: *“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.”* (John 1:40–42) Now from this time on, when we hear about Andrew in the Bible, he’s mentioned like this: *“Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”* That is, there really wasn’t much about this fellow Andrew except that he was Simon Peter’s brother. He

was not a big shot. He didn't have a flamboyant personality. He was just sort of an also-ran—just a very common, ordinary sort of a fellow. But there's something very wonderful about the man named Andrew, as you're going to see and already you have seen: he had a unique ability of bringing people to Jesus—and such a wonderful ability! He found his brother, and he brought him to Jesus.

And while Andrew was not such a big shot, Simon Peter was a big shot, if we can say there are big shots and little shots in the kingdom of heaven. Actually, I think some of these big shots ought to be fired—I mean the ones who think they're big shots. But we hear so much about the great flaming Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, and Peter, who the Lord Jesus said was going to have the keys of the kingdom and all of this. We hear such a little bit about Andrew. He's only mentioned just several times. But pay so much attention to the character of this man, because I think many of us can be very much like Andrew. There's not a lot that we can do, but there's one thing that we can do—and that is to bring people to Jesus Christ. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.

The world hasn't heard a lot about Andrew. And you take the man on the street, and he probably doesn't even know there was a disciple named Andrew, but most everybody knows there was a disciple named Simon Peter. Most of us don't know of Mr. Kimball, who led the shoe clerk to Jesus. Mr. Kimball laid a trembling hand on the shoulder of a shoe clerk and told him about Jesus. The shoe clerk was Dwight L Moody. Many people haven't heard of Kimball, but they've heard of Moody. And I know that our heavenly Father knows who Mr. Kimball is.

All right, I want to look at another passage of Scripture. Turn to John chapter 6. This is the scripture that surrounds the event of the feeding of the five thousand—John chapter 6, verse 5: *“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew...”*—here he is again—*“Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.”* (John 6:5–11)

Now, who is the hero of this story? Well, the little boy is, and Jesus is, but I think Andrew is, too—I think Andrew is, too. Now all of the rest of the disciples were there, I'm certain, doing all of those important things. And Andrew, well, he just didn't feel too comfortable talking to all of the important people who were there that day. But there was

a little fellow there—just a lad—and Andrew somehow struck up a conversation with this little boy, and found out about his lunch, and found out some personal things about him. I don't know what it all tells you, but it tells me that Andrew was a certain kind of a guy. And while Andrew wasn't so much, he brought a little boy to Jesus. And with that little boy's lunch Jesus fed the five thousand.

Now I want you to look at another story here in the Bible, if you will. Turn to John chapter 12 for a moment—I'm going to begin reading in verse 20: *"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus."* Here are some Greeks who had an intellectual curiosity; they wanted to know about Jesus Christ. *"Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus."* (John 12:20–22) Now, that's a remarkable thing to me—very remarkable. They never picked out Andrew. Andrew was not the fellow that you'd walk up to and say, "Tell me how to get *anywhere* to do *anything*." He just wasn't that kind of a fellow. So they come to Philip—evidently, Philip was a little sharper type of a guy—and they come to Philip, and they say, "Now we want an appointment with your master"—*"we would see Jesus."* (John 12:21) But it's remarkable to me that Philip went right away to Andrew. And it was Andrew who was really the co-bringer, or the one who was at least partially responsible for getting these men to Jesus Christ. There was just something about Andrew that brought people to Jesus.

And these are just the three mentions that we have here in the Gospel of John concerning Andrew—but each time he's bringing people to Jesus. He wasn't much, but Simon Peter was much. He wasn't much, but feeding five thousand was much. He wasn't much, but tradition tells us that these Greeks who came to see Jesus—among them was Dr. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke. So he wasn't much, but he was much. He wasn't a big shot, but he was a big shot. He wasn't so sharp, but he was sharp. He was a great man because he had a penchant and ability to bring men to Jesus Christ.

Now I don't want to preach down to you, but I want to be very straightforward with you. And I hope I won't hurt your feelings, but I want you to listen. If you are a child of God, you ought to be bringing people to Jesus. And if you're not bringing people to Jesus and you are a child of God, you're not right with God, and you're cold, indifferent, and backslidden, and you are a disgrace to the profession of faith that you made when you made Jesus Christ your Lord. I don't care how faithfully you attend this church; I care not how sacrificially you give of your money; I care not how beautifully you may sing your solo; I care not how eloquently you may teach a class, and I care not how circumspectly you may walk—if you're not endeavoring to bring people to Jesus Christ, you're not right with God. Now, just let that sink in: If you're not endeavoring to bring

people to Jesus Christ, you are not right with God. And I want to speak for just a few moments about our solemn responsibility to bring people to Jesus Christ. I want to tell you why we're so responsible.

I. Our Knowledge Makes Us Responsible

In the first place, our knowledge makes us responsible. When Andrew had a knowledge of Jesus, that made him responsible to share Jesus. Would you look, please, in Ezekiel chapter 33, for a moment: one of the most terrifying passages in all the Bible for those of us who are Christians—the Lord here is speaking about our solemn obligation to warn people of the wrath of God. And I read Ezekiel chapter 33, beginning in verse 8. God is speaking: *“When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”* (Ezekiel 33:8–9) I believe there are some who are sitting here listening to me tonight who have bloody hands. You have loved ones—God has spoken to you, and God has told you to warn those loved ones—and those loved ones are going to die—and, yea, some of them have already died in their sin. They're lost—forever lost—and you've not warned them. And God says their blood is required at your hand.

The Scripture says, *“He that winneth souls is wise.”* (Proverbs 11:30) Do you know the problem with many of us? We're smart, but we're not wise. Oh, I know people who know the Bible. We have Bible scholars in this church—you've been studying the Bible since you were a beginner here at Bellevue, since you were here in the nursery at Bellevue, and you know the Bible, but you're not a soul winner. Now, don't brag about your orthodoxy. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that your knowledge is going to be held against you. *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”* (Luke 12:48) I know people who can split a theological hair into sixteen equal quarters or divisions, and yet they never win a soul to Jesus Christ. Do you know what Charles Haddon Spurgeon had to say about Bible knowledge—you know, those folks who are always getting smarter and smarter and smarter, and they know more and more and more, but they don't win souls? Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “I would rather bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than to unpick all of the mysteries of the divine Word.”

Our knowledge makes us responsible. We hear enough gospel preaching around here and enough gospel teaching to save the world, but yet we just simply take it in and we don't give it out. One of these days, we're going to be held accountable. Suppose you have the cure for cancer and didn't tell it. I tell you, you'd be a criminal.

II. Our Blessings Make Us Responsible

Now, secondly, not only does our knowledge make us responsible; our blessings make us responsible. God has been so good to us. Are we going to simply take in and not give out? Are we going to be like a sponge: the only time we give out is if we're squeezed? Oh, listen. We are to give as it was given unto us. Our Lord said, "*Freely ye have received, freely give.*" (Matthew 10:8) "This is a day of glad tidings." (2 Kings 7:9) Are we just going to simply let it go by? The Bible says in Psalm 107, verse 2, "*Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.*" (Psalm 107:2) Jesus spoke in Matthew 25 about a man who had his talent and he hid it in the ground. And Jesus didn't say to him, "Oh, you just missed an opportunity." Jesus said, "*Thou wicked and slothful servant.*" (Matthew 25:26) It is wicked and sinful to be so blessed and not to share our blessings. Those two lepers said, "This is a day of glad tidings, and we'd better share it, or something bad is going to happen to us." (2 Kings 7:9) Our blessings make us responsible.

Huber, the naturalist, said, "There's something remarkable about a wasp, the little insect. If he finds some sweetness, if he finds some nectar, if he finds some syrup or honey on the ground, that wasp will fly back to the wasp nest immediately and communicate that"—however they talk or communicate—"to the other wasps. And before long, you'll see a string of wasps coming back to this one place of sweetness."

Now, shouldn't Christians have at least as much character as a wasp? When we found something sweet and wonderful, and Sharon's fairest rose, should we not share it? Should we not tell it? It makes me wonder if a person has ever even been saved if he does not want to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. The Command of Our Lord Makes Us Responsible

But not only does our knowledge make us responsible; and not only do our blessings make us responsible; the very command of our Lord makes us responsible. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 28, verses 19 and 20, "*Go ye therefore, and [make disciples of] all [the] nations, baptizing them [into] 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.*" (Matthew 28:19–20) This is not a suggestion; it's not a request; it is a command.

Dr. Lee R. Scarborough, who was the founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said this: "To refuse to witness the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world day by day is nothing less than high treason against the King of kings." You see, to refuse to witness is not mere failure; it is a clenched fist in the face of God, saying, "I will not obey." Our Lord said, "*Ye shall be witnesses unto me.*" (Acts 1:8)

Dr. R. A. Torrey—in my estimation, one of the finest Christians and Bible teachers that ever lived—said this—and I quote: "I would like to know what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he's not a soul winner." Did that sink in? Listen

to it again: “I would like to know what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he’s not a soul winner.” What Mr. Torrey meant was this: How can we claim to follow Jesus if His purpose is not our purpose? And the purpose of Jesus Christ is to win people to Himself. Luke 19:10: *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

IV. Our Opportunities Make Us Responsible

Now I want to say again that not only does His command make us responsible, but our opportunities make us responsible. Now you may think that you don’t have an opportunity to win somebody to Jesus; but you do. All of us have opportunities. There’s not anyone here, I’m convinced, who could not bring someone to Jesus Christ—there’s not anyone here who could not bring someone to Jesus Christ.

I remember reading years ago in a message that George W. Truett preached called “The Quest for Souls,” and he talked about a minister who stood in his pulpit. And this minister, in preaching, said, “Anybody ought to be able to bring someone to Jesus Christ,” and he just really bore down on that thing. And later, a little seamstress, who was a very poor woman, and who had to work in her home just to make ends meet, came to see this minister. She was somewhat upset. She was exercised over it, and she said, “Pastor, I don’t believe you were fair tonight. I don’t believe that you were considerate when you said that anybody could bring someone to Jesus Christ.” She said, “I can’t do that.” She said, “I don’t have the opportunity. I have no way to get out of the house. I don’t meet any unsaved people. I have to stay here and sew and just eke out a bare living. And, sure, most people can; but I can’t. I don’t have any opportunity.”

He said, “Madam, let me ask you a question: Does the milkman ever come to your apartment?” “Oh,” she said, “yes, every day.” “Does the grocer ever come? The butcher?” “Oh, yes.” “The baker?” “Oh, yes.” “Other people come?” “Oh, yes.” He said, “A word to the wise is sufficient”—and that’s all he said. That went to her heart, that little seamstress, like a dagger from the hand of God. And she went back and began to pray. And the next morning she made up her mind, though she’d never done it before, she was going to witness to that milkman. She was up early. The milkman was startled to see her. He said, “Madam, what are you doing up so early?” And she started to hem and haw, and her feet got cold, and she just lost the courage. She was going to talk to him about Jesus, but she stammered a few things inconsequential and then backed away. And then suddenly the Holy Spirit gave her that courage, and she said, “Pardon me, but I’m here to talk to you about something very important.” And she just told him the whole story of how God had spoken to her, and she started to speak to him about his soul. And when she did, his face grew white, and he looked at her so startled. He said, “Madam, this is a most remarkable thing.” He said, “I have not been able to sleep

for two solid nights because God has been dealing with my soul. I've been so hungry to know God, and surely God laid it upon your heart to speak to me." And that little lady, according to Dr. Truett, went on to win seven people to Jesus Christ—the one who said, "I have no opportunity to bring anyone to Jesus Christ." You do. Every one of us does. I tell you, our opportunities make us responsible somehow, somewhere.

Now it may not be easy. I remember reading in another place of a lady in Paris who was dressed in her silks and her satin. She was walking down one of the prominent boulevards there in Paris, and she reached in her purse and pulled out a very valuable ring. And when she did, it slipped from her finger and down into the gutter on that Paris street. This lady, who was quite dignified and very elegant, took the crook of her parasol and fished around in the slime for that very valuable ring. And she couldn't get it that way, so finally she ripped off that dainty white glove, rolled up that lace sleeve, and bent down and put those manicured nails down into that slime, down along the gutter, and she fished along until she found her ring.

You see, it was just a matter of value—that's all. You see, it all depends on how we value souls, doesn't it? You know, whether we're willing to humble ourselves and get down with people. And it may cost—it may cost a little shame; it may cost a little embarrassment—but I tell you, if we're willing to humble ourselves, and if we value a soul as Jesus valued a soul, I believe the Lord can use us.

And what I'm saying is you don't have to be a super salesman. You don't have to be a junior-sized Billy Graham. Maybe you're just an Andrew. Maybe you're an Andrew who can find a member of your family. Maybe you're an Andrew who can bring a little boy. Maybe you're an Andrew who can help somebody else like Philip bring somebody to Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you I get a bigger thrill out of winning one soul to Jesus than I do preaching to thousands on Sunday morning. I mean that with all of my heart. I've told some of you before, the first soul that the Lord ever enabled me to bring to Himself that I know of was when I was just a teenage boy and I'd given my heart to the Lord. I went to Ridgecrest, our Baptist assembly here, and I heard a man preach a message on soul winning, that everybody ought to be a soul winner. I don't remember the message; I just remember the subject: that everybody ought to be a soul winner. And then this man said, "How many of you will promise to win a soul to Jesus"—I thought he was going to say, "this week." He said—"this year?" I put up my hand. I thought, "My goodness, if anybody can't bring a soul to Jesus in a year, there's something wrong." And I put up my hand, but I didn't know anything about soul winning—I didn't know a thing. I had never been trained—hadn't had the Four Spiritual Laws, the nine keys, the twelve ways, or anything else. I didn't know anything about that. But I went back to West Palm Beach, Florida, where I was there in high school. And I had gone down to the corner service

station to buy some kerosene to wash off some bicycle parts on an old bicycle I was working on, and I didn't have a shirt on. I didn't have any shoes on—just a pair of Levi's. That's the way we dressed—to show off our muscles. It was just in the summertime—just a barefooted boy, just a kid.

And an old man came up to me. This old man had a white beard, and he had an extension cord in his hand. He said, "Son, would you like to buy this extension cord?" I said, "No, I don't want your extension cord. Why are you trying to sell it?" He said, "Well, I've been an old fool." I said, "How's that?" He said, "I live on a pension, and this month when I got my pension check," he said, "I cashed it, and a friend and I started drinking. And I spent all of my money on whiskey. And," he said, "now I'm having to sell my tools and some of my things to make it through until I get another check." He said, "I've just been an old fool." Those are the words he used. I said, "Mister, I don't have any money." I had about sixteen cents in my jeans. I said, "I don't have any money—just a few cents to buy this kerosene with." I said, "If I had some money, I would give it to you; but I don't." And I started to walk away from him.

And the Lord said to me, "Adrian, speak to that man about his soul." I said, "Lord, I can't do that. He's a man, and I'm a boy." And I started to walk away again, and the Lord said, "Adrian, remember Ridgecrest? You promised you would." I said, "Lord, I don't even have a shirt on. I don't have any shoes on." And so I started to walk away again, and He said, "Adrian, you promised." Now it wasn't an audible voice; it was much louder than that. He said, "Adrian, you promised."

Well, I got frightened. I thought I'd die if I did; I knew I'd die if I didn't. I was just afraid—afraid to speak to him, because I didn't know what to say. I wasn't trained. I didn't even know how to begin the conversation. Besides that, before I'd gotten saved, I was in many a street fight right on that corner: Broadway and 40th Street in West Palm Beach. I was sort of a drugstore cowboy, and we just hung out right there. And that's where I was a bad boy: right there on that street corner. And I said, "Man, what if someone comes by and sees me talking about God out here in public like this?" And all those thoughts went through my mind.

But I just turned back to him and I said, "Sir, just a moment. I don't have any money, but I think I have something better than money. I want to ask you a question: Are you a Christian?" And when I said that, his chin started to quiver. You know how a man's chin will quiver when he starts to cry. And the tears just welled up in both eyes and started to run down the steep crevices in his chin and in his cheeks and dripped off that white beard. He said, "No, son, I'm not a Christian." I said, "Mister, do you want to be a Christian?" He said, "More than anything in this world, if I just knew how to be." "Oh," I said, "I wish I had a Bible." He said, "I have one." And he reached down in the lining of that old coat—not even in the pocket in the lining—and brought out a little Gideon New

Testament, and he handed it to me. Where he picked it up I don't know, but he had it and carried it. The only verse I found was John 3:16, to my knowledge. And I read John 3:16 to him, and I told him when God loved, He loved the world; and when God gave, He gave His Son; and that when I believed in God's Son, God's Son saved me. And I told him that Jesus had died for him on the cross, and that if he simply believed, like John 3:16 said, God would save him.

And then he said, "Well, what should I do?" I said, "Well, I prayed and asked Him to save me. Why don't you pray and ask Him to save you?" He said, "All right," and he bowed his head and started to pray. And he started to cry, and I started to cry. Now, that surprised me. And the two of us—an old man and a teenage boy—were standing there blubbering. He's crying, and I'm crying. And he prayed and asked Jesus to save him.

Then I looked up, and I said, "Well, did He do it?" He said, "I believe He did." I said, "Well, wonderful." And I didn't know anything about follow up. I just started backing away. I said, "Well, that's wonderful. Goodbye, sir. Thank you for letting me talk to you." And I walked away a few steps. And he called me back, and he said, "Young man, come back over here." I went back, and he said, "Young man, I'm an old man, and I've been in almost every one of the forty-eight states,"—there were forty-eight then—"and you're the first person to ever speak with me about my soul. Thank you, young man. Thank you." I walked home about *this* high off the sidewalk, leaping and dancing, to think that God would let me witness His saving grace to someone else.

Conclusion

Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, you can let Congress make the laws, let Wall Street handle the finances, let the movie stars have their fame: "*He that winneth souls is wise.*" (Proverbs 11:30) And one of these days you're going to find out that the most important thing that you could do would be to bring your life into link with Jesus. And the goal of Jesus Christ is to bring men unto Himself. "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance*"—"a faithful saying"—"*that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" (1 Timothy 1:15) "*The Son of man [has] come to seek and to save that which [is] lost.*" (Luke 19:10) Human knowledge makes you responsible. Your blessings make you responsible. The command of Jesus Christ makes you responsible, and the opportunities that our God is giving you make you responsible.

Nathanael Bartholomew: The Man Who Lost a Prejudice and Found the Savior

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 15, 1973

Main Scripture Text: John 1:45–51

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

JOHN 1:45

Outline

Introduction

- I. His Confrontation with Jesus
- II. His Confusion about Jesus
- III. His Conversion to Jesus
 - A. Come Humbly
 - B. Come Honestly
 - C. Come Diligently
 - D. Come Submissively
- IV. His Confession of Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, please, to John chapter 1, and we will begin our reading in verse 45. We are speaking this morning on this subject: “Nathanael Bartholomew: The Man Who Lost a Prejudice and Found the Savior.” John chapter 1, verse 45: *“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw*

thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (John 1:45–51)

In 1930, in the Rose Bowl, Roy Riegels intercepted a pass. He was playing for the University of Southern California. This was his big moment. There was the ball, and he reached up and picked it out of the air, and made a dazzling, amazing run, and scored a touchdown. The only thing wrong was that he ran the wrong way and scored it for the wrong team. Roy was sincere—as sincere as he could be—but he was sincerely wrong.

This is the story of a man who was a sincere man but a sincerely wrong man, a man who had a big prejudice and yet a man in whom there was no guile. You see, he was confused. He was upset. His mind was distorted, but yet he really didn't want it to be. He was like a lot of good people who live today: good people who have wrong ideas; sincere, but sincerely wrong. His name is Nathanael. You'll find that Matthew, Mark, and Luke call him Bartholomew, and John calls him Nathanael. Actually, Bartholomew was his last name; Nathanael is his first name. His full name is Nathanael Bartholomew.

Because there's nothing given about him in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, except his name—this is the only passage except one brief mention in John 21 that we have of Nathanael at all—we're going to have to draw most of our truths and most of our lessons from this one passage of Scripture right now. I want you to notice several things about the man who lost his prejudice and found the Savior.

I. His Confrontation with Jesus

The first thing I want you to notice is this: his confrontation with Jesus. He was confronted with Jesus by Philip. Now, remember we preached about Philip. Philip was the levelheaded man. Philip was the show-me disciple. Philip was the reasoning, calculating disciple. He had to figure things out. He had to know in his own mind, and Philip had figured out by a study of prophecy that Jesus was the Messiah. And he was so excited about it that he found Nathanael, and he had to share it with Nathanael.

And let me say in passing, dear friend, if the Jesus you know is not the Jesus you share, you don't know the same Jesus I know. I mean, if you can't get excited enough about Jesus to want to tell somebody else about Him, I wonder if you even know Him. Now, *if you can't give your faith away, you ought to give it up.* It's not worth much. I mean, if you're not excited about this person called Jesus, there's something wrong with you. Why, Philip, when he said, “We found Him,” the first thing that he could think about was this: “I want Nate to know about this”—or did he call him Bart?—“I want him to know about it.” “Oh, Nathanael, listen! We found Him of whom Moses and the prophets have spoken.” (John 1:45)

Now, when we preached on Philip, we talked about the prophecies, but I did not give

you the specific prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ that are found in the Bible. And it will just bless your heart. Get a pencil and jot them down, because I want to give you some Old Testament scriptures. I want to show you why Philip was so excited about this One called the Lord Jesus and what he told Nathanael. What does the Old Testament prophesy about the Lord Jesus Christ?

In the first place, the Bible prophesies that He's to be conceived of a woman. (Genesis 3:15) Secondly, He was to be the seed of Abraham. (Genesis 22:18) Thirdly, the seed of David. (Jeremiah 23:5) He was to be of the tribe of Judah. (Genesis 49:10) The time of His coming was prophesied in Daniel 9, verses 24 and 25. (Daniel 9:24–25) His virgin birth was prophesied. (Isaiah 7:14) The place of His birth was prophesied. (Micah 5:2) His forerunner, John the Baptist, was prophesied. (Malachi 3:1) That He would be betrayed by a friend was prophesied. (Psalm 41:9) His triumphal entry into Jerusalem that we celebrate and commemorate today was prophesied. (Zechariah 9:9) That He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver was prophesied. (Zechariah 11:12) That He would die a death by crucifixion was prophesied. (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53) That He would be raised from the dead was prophesied. (Psalm 16:10) All of these scriptures prophesied the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, not all of them had yet been fulfilled when Philip got so excited that he wanted to go tell Nathanael.

But just think of the ones that have been fulfilled—I want you to think of these prophecies as ever-converging concentric circles, closing in, closing in, and closing in. For example, think with me, God prophesied the race that the Lord Jesus would come from: the human race, the seed of the woman. And then God went on and prophesied what division of that race the Lord Jesus Christ would come from: a descendant of Seth. And then, God went on and prophesied what nation out of that division of that race the Lord Jesus would come from: the Jewish nation, a descendant of Abraham. And then, the Lord went on to prophesy what tribe of that nation of that division of that race the Lord Jesus Christ would come from: the tribe of Judah. And then, the Lord went on and prophesied what family of that tribe of the nation of that division of that race the Lord Jesus Christ would come from: the family of David. And then, the Bible went on to prophesy what person of that family of that tribe of that nation of that division of that race the Lord Jesus Christ would be born of: the virgin. And then, the Bible went on to prophesy what place that virgin of that family of that tribe of that division of that race would be born in. And then, the Bible prophesied what time, what place, what woman, what family, what tribe, what nation, what division, what race.

Can't you see God as He's getting the great prophetic telescope into focus? Can't you see as all of the beams center upon the Lord Jesus Christ? I tell you, it's just fantastic how the Bible just takes all of these scriptures and closes in on every side. And, finally, when He comes, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, amazing!

Fantastic! This is one way that Philip knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy, and this was the good news that He ran to tell Nathanael. And Nathanael is confronted with the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. His Confusion about Jesus

But the second thing I want you to notice: not only his confrontation with Jesus, but, secondly, his confusion about Jesus. In verse 45, we have his confrontation; but in verse 46, we have his confusion: *“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.”* (John 1:46) Now, what was the confusion that was in Nathanael’s mind? Nathanael had a prejudice: He did not like the Nazarenes.

Now Nathanael was from Cana, and Cana and Nazareth were close. Maybe they were rivals on a football team—I don’t know. I don’t guess they had football. But Nathanael just couldn’t stand the Nazarenes. He was prejudiced against the Nazarenes, and he had made up his mind that no one good could come out of Nazareth. If he was from Nazareth, he was automatically bad. And as a matter of fact, this was a commonly held prejudice in that day, because most people kind of looked down upon the Nazarenes. You get the same train of thought in John chapter 7, verse 52, where someone said, *“Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”* (John 7:52) Now, that wasn’t true, but that was what they were saying. Now, of course, Nazareth and Galilee were in the same locality, and they were saying, “Out of Galilee no prophet can come”—“Why, those country bumpkins up there in Galilee—and of the worst of the country bumpkins are the people who live in the little town of Nazareth.” And so Nathanael says, “Well, He couldn’t be the Messiah if He came out of Nazareth.”

But what caused Nathanael’s prejudice? The thing that really caused his prejudice was his ignorance. You see, the mother of prejudice is ignorance, and the child of ignorance is prejudice. Remember this: Had Nathanael known the Bible, he would have known that Jesus was to come from Nazareth. Why? The Bible said in Matthew chapter 2, verse 23, *“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”* (Matthew 2:23) And, you see, Nathanael’s ignorance caused his prejudice. Had he known the Bible, he would not have had his prejudice that he had.

So, what is prejudice? Prejudice is being down on what we’re not up on: that’s what prejudice is. Prejudice comes when we make certain conclusions without having all the facts.

A man went to South America, I’m told, and when he came back, he said, “It’s an amazing thing: All of the Indians in South America walk in single file when they walk.” His friend said, “That’s unusual. Are you certain?” He said, “Well, the one I saw did.”

Now, that's the way so many people are with their conclusions: They see something, and when they see something, then they pass that something onto everything. And they say, "All people of this race are bad," or, "All people of this race are good," or, "Nothing good can come from there; everything good must come from here." That was what was wrong with Nathanael. He had a prejudice, and it was very evident. "*Can...any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" And I want to say that his prejudice was rooted in his ignorance.

Now, let me say something right here: There are lots of folks who are not Christians, because they're prejudiced against the Lord Jesus Christ, they're prejudiced against the Bible, they're prejudiced against the things of the Lord. They've heard certain things about Christians. They've heard certain things about the Bible. They have not investigated the Bible for themselves. For example, so often I hear people say something to me like this: "Well, I don't believe the Bible because the Bible's full of contradictions." Did you ever hear anything like that? Sometimes when I'm feeling real mean, I just hand my Bible to them and say, "Well, show me one." "Well, I can't show you one, but I know it's in there somewhere." You see? They don't know about a contradiction; they are just prejudiced. They heard somebody say that, and they accepted that.

Some people have heard about certain things that happened in certain churches, so they don't want Jesus. You see, they are prejudiced against Jesus because of what they heard in the life of some so-called Christian. And what they have rejected is not Christianity; it's *churchianity*, or some idea about the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, Nathanael's problem was his prejudice, and his prejudice was rooted in ignorance. And I daresay there are a lot of people today who are not Christians because they are prejudiced against Christianity. They have never really examined the facts for themselves. I tell you, if you were to see the Lord Jesus Christ as He is, if you were to learn the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ as it is, I couldn't keep you away from Jesus with a machine gun. "Oh," you'd say, "I want the Lord Jesus Christ." "*Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty.*" (Isaiah 33:17) And I would to God this morning that you'd look past some of your biases and your preformed ideas and let God the Holy Spirit speak to you. Nathanael almost missed finding Jesus because he had a preconceived idea: "*Can...any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46)

III. His Conversion to Jesus

Now, the third thing I want you notice is not only his confrontation with Jesus, and not only his confusion about Jesus, but I want you to notice his conversion to Jesus. How did he come to the Lord Jesus Christ? Look again in verse 46: "*Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and*

see.” (John 1:46) There’s the cure for prejudice: “Come and see; investigate for yourself.” I tell you, anybody in this building who wants to know the truth about God can know it; anybody in this building who wants to know the truth about Jesus Christ can know it. And God’s invitation is always just, “*Come and see.*” “*Taste and see that the LORD is good.*” (Psalm 34:8)

Friend, don’t you tell me that it’s not real, if you’ve not investigated—I mean, honestly investigated. I want to put a challenge to you today: If you want to know whether Jesus Christ is the Son of God or not, if you want to know whether the Bible is the Word of God or not, if you want to know whether Jesus Christ can save you or not, and change your life or not, I say to you, come and see—come and see. Oh, you may have some prejudice, you may have some idea, you may have something that the kids call a *hang up*, but I know the cure: Come and see—just come and see. But when you come, let me tell you how you’re going to have to come.

A. **Come Humbly**

In the first place, you’re going to have to come humbly. Look in Matthew chapter 11 for a moment—verses 25 and 26: “*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*” (Matthew 11:25–26) Do you know what that means? You’re going to have to come and see with a childlike mind. God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent. If you want to know the truth about Jesus Christ, you’re going to have to put away your test tubes and your slide rules. You’re going to have to put away your adding machine. You’re going to have to lay your intellectual pride in the dust, for God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He has revealed them to babes. You’re going to have to come humbly, if you come. You see, a little child is teachable, but I know some adults who are so fixed in their minds they wouldn’t even listen to both sides of a phonograph record. A child is teachable; he’s humble.

B. **Come Honestly**

I’ll tell you another way you’re going to have to come: Not only must you come humbly, but you must come honestly—honestly—really wanting to know. Here was God’s promise to the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29, verse 13: “*Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*” (Jeremiah 29:13) You see, if you want to know, you can know. God says, “You can seek for me, and you can find me, when you come with all of your heart.” If you come with a divided heart, if you come with mixed motives, if you come looking for some sort of ammunition to back up your argument, you’re not going to find the truth.

Somebody has said, “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” I

saw another little motto on an office wall, and it said this: “My mind is made up. Don’t confuse me with facts.” Now, that’s the way some folks are. They don’t want to know the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ—they do not, honestly.

A man one time, so the story goes, was attacked by two muggers in the park; and they wrestled with him and beat him, trying to rob him. They almost killed him. Finally, they got their hands in his pocket and got out one dime. That’s all he had. One of them said, “Man, we almost killed you. Why did you put up such a fight over one dime?” He said, “Well, to tell you the truth, I didn’t want my financial condition exposed.”

Now, this is the way some of us are: Rather than trying to find the truth and discover a principle, we’re defending a prejudice. We don’t want the condition of our heart exposed, and that’s why we fight. We don’t really want to know the truth. You watch some folks: When they come to the Bible, they come to the Bible with their mind already made up, locked against the truth—they won’t find God.

C. **Come Diligently**

Friend, if you come, you have to come humbly. You have to come honestly. The Bible says, “*Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*” (Jeremiah 29:13) Are you really trying to discover a principle, or are you trying to defend a prejudice? Another way that you must come is diligently.

Look in Proverbs chapter 2 for a moment—here’s a great verse. There are some of you, right now you’re saying, “Brother Rogers, are these things true—I mean, what you’re talking about? Can Jesus Christ change my life? Is there a life abundant and victorious?” There is, but how are you going to find it? In Proverbs chapter 2, verses 3 through 5: “*Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*” (Proverbs 2:3–5) When you get as interested in knowing God as you are in having money, when your soul cries out, when you hunger and thirst after knowledge and righteousness, you will have it.

D. **Come Submissively**

You see, the invitation today is, “*Come and see.*” But as you come and see, you have to come humbly like a little child. You have to come honestly, with all of your heart. You have to come diligently, really wanting to know. And I want to say one other thing: You have to come submissively. You see, truth is not something you learn just simply to say, “How interesting!” and then put it in your pocket. Truth is not only interesting; it is unsettling. Not only must you be willing to revise your ideas; you must be willing to reform your life. I’m saying that if you want to know the truth about God, you must be willing to do the will of God, or you’ll never know the truth about God. Am I making

sense to you? Your will must be surrendered first. When you come and see, you must come with a surrendered will; you must come submissively.

There were some people who wanted to know who Jesus Christ was in the seventh chapter of John. And Jesus put this challenge to them in John chapter 7, verse 17: *“If any man will do [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine.”* (John 7:17) Do you know what that means in plain English? If you want to do the will of God, you’ll have the right knowledge—if you really want to do the will of God. Nathanael was converted because he came humbly, he came honestly, he came diligently, he came submissively—but he came. Philip said to Nathanael, *“[Nathanael,] come and see.”* (John 1:46) Nathanael came, he saw, and he was converted.

Now, what was it that the Lord Jesus Christ showed him when he came? Well, Nathanael is coming, walking up to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus sees him. He doesn’t even speak to Nathanael. First of all, He speaks to those around him. He says, *“Behold an Israelite.”* Nathanael is thinking. He says, “Well, He knows my race. That’s obvious. I look like an Israelite.” But He says, *“Behold an Israelite indeed.”* “Oh,” he says, “He knows that I’m a practicing Jew; I really believe it. Well, that’s a good guess.” *“In whom is no guile.”* (John 1:47) “Oh, He knows how my mind works. He knows that I keep everything out on the surface. Well, maybe He’s a psychologist.” And so Nathanael says, “How do you know me? You’ve never met me.” And Jesus says, “Nathanael, before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (John 1:48)—and that did it!

Now, what was Nathanael doing under that fig tree? Well, I don’t think he was doing anything bad. I think he was studying the Bible. You see, in a hot climate, this was their air conditioning. Almost every home had a fig tree planted by the front door, and people sat out there under the shade, under the fig tree. I believe Nathanael was studying the Scriptures. I believe he wanted to know the truth. And the Lord Jesus Christ, by His omniscience, knew all about Nathanael. Nathanael said, “Oh, He knows my race.” Nathanael says, “Oh, He knows my heart.” Nathanael says, “Oh, oh, He knows my past. He knows all about me. How could He know this? How could He know these things?” And that’s all it took to convince Nathanael.

Now I don’t think that would have ever convinced Philip; I think Philip would have wanted more. But just that much convinced Nathanael, because, you see, Nathanael really wanted to know the truth. The Lord Jesus knew that he had an honest heart, even though he had a hang up, even though he had a prejudice. The Lord Jesus Christ started with him where he was and led him on to the truth. And I tell you, dear friend, if you will be honest—that’s all—Jesus will start with you where you are and He’ll give you whatever’s necessary to lead you to the truth. If you really want to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you can find Him.

IV. His Confession of Jesus

Oh, I must finish this message. Time has gone so quickly this morning. But let me say one last thing. Let me talk to you about not only his conversion to Jesus, but his confession of Jesus, and then we'll stop there. I want you to notice what Nathanael said about the Lord Jesus Christ. Go back to John chapter 1 and look in verse 49. Nathanael is convinced, and *“Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”* (John 1:49)

Now, what did he call Jesus? I don't have time to develop this, but he called Him three things. He called Him Master. He called Him Mediator. He called Him Messiah. The word *rabbi* means “master.” *Son of God* means “mediator,” the One whom God has sent. *King of Israel* means “Messiah.” Oh, see the insight that he had! He said, “You're my Master. You're the Mediator, the One to lead us to God. And you are the Messiah, the King of Israel.” This was his confession.

I wonder today, are you willing to make that confession? Are you willing to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as your Master? The Bible says, *“One is your Master, even Christ.”* (Matthew 23:8, 10) Are you willing to confess Him as the Son of God? 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 the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* (John 3:18) Are you willing to confess Him as the Son of God? Are you willing to confess Him as the Messiah, the King of Israel, and the King of your heart? If you are, He will save you. I'll guarantee you on the authority of this book *“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.”* (Romans 10:9) It's not enough just to say it with your lips; you must mean it with your life.

Conclusion

Years ago, in Los Angeles there was a man called the Human Fly. He climbed up the side of brick buildings, skyscrapers, and in this particular event he was climbing up the side of a big department store. It was a publicity scheme for a big store. Crowds were there by the thousands, and this man went up the side of that building. Here he would hold onto a cornice. Here he would hold onto a window ledge. Here he would get his fingertips in some crevice in the bricks. Many stories up this man went, going from place to place. Finally, when he was almost at the top, he seemed to run out of any place to put his hand. And he looked, and there, jutting out, was a darkened piece of promontory that looked like some piece of stone or masonry. It was just out of the reach of his fingers, but he figured that he could give a little spring and reach it. And he did, and made a grab for it, and plummeted to the ground. When they found his crushed body and pried open his hands, they found that he had grabbed for a spider web—just a

crusted spider web—and that's what he had in his hand.

There are folks in Memphis today who are trying to climb to heaven, and they're putting their trust in nothing any stronger than a crusty web when they ought to have the Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6)

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Disappointment

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 5, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 2:1

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there."

JOHN 2:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Setting of the Miracle
- II. The Symbolism of the Miracle
- III. The Secret of the Miracle
- IV. The Significance of the Miracle
- V. The Sequel to the Miracle

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, be finding John chapter 2, and then let me tell you what's going to be happening. I am writing a book, and the title of the book is something like this—though I've not completely settled on the title: "Believe in Miracles, but Trust in Jesus"—"Believe in Miracles, but Trust in Jesus." And there's so much today in the world about miracles, and there's so much bogus talk about miracles that's not rooted in the Word of God, but rather in New Age mysticism. We know indeed that it is a sin to attribute to Satan the work of the Holy Ghost. It's also a sin to attribute to the Holy Ghost the work of Satan. And there is, however, the great wonderful, beautiful world and realm of the miraculous. And I want to say at the very outset of this message, even before we get into it, that I believe in miracles. And I want us to be a church that is based on the miracle-working power of God.

But the greatest miracle is the transformation of a soul, as you're going to see in this series of messages. Now, in the days to come, you're going to be hearing more about miracles than you've heard in a long time, because I'm going to be speaking to you every opportunity I have for a while. Wednesday night, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night again, Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, until I

get what's in my heart into your head and heart, and just kind of be pouring it out from me into you. Now, some of this material you will have heard before, but I'm trying to get it into a shape and into a form so that I can get it down into a book form. So, if you've heard it before, you'll hear it again. If you haven't, you'll hear it for the first time, but I pray that all of us together will learn to trust the Lord in a way that we never have before.

John chapter two, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 1: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, What he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto the, Draw some out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not from where it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

Now, this miracle that I just read to you is the first miracle in a parade of miracles that you will find in the Gospel of John. And literally, John mentions seven miracles. They are more than miracles, and the word to describe them is a word that is translated sign. That is, it is a miracle with a message. It is a sign with a significance. Now, what is the purpose of these seven signs? We don't have to guess. We don't have to ask ourselves in puzzlement, because God clearly tells us.

Keep your bookmark there in John chapter two, and fast-forward to John chapter 20, and look, if you will, in verses 30 and 31, and you're going to find out why John gave seven miracles: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Here's what he says in verse 30: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Now, let me pause right there and say, Believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus. Do you understand what John is saying? These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing, that you might have life through His name. The greatest of miracles, therefore, is the transformation of a life. The greatest miracle, beyond a shadow of any doubt, is the new birth—greater than any other miracle, in my estimation.

Now, there are several things I want us to learn now about this story of Jesus turning water into wine. And the title of our study tonight is this: that Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointment. That's what I want you to learn tonight, that Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointment.

I. The Setting of the Miracle

Now, the first thing I want you to learn is, I want you to see the setting of this miracle. This miracle, the first miracle that Jesus did, took place at a wedding. And that was a happy occasion. And I think it's tragic that Jesus is not invited to more weddings today, don't you? Now, Jesus attended both weddings and funerals. Jesus never broke up a feast, but He often broke up a funeral. Jesus lived a life of great, great joy. And this miracle that He did at a wedding tells us that Jesus is not a cosmic killjoy, that He came that we might have abounding joy.

A little boy was setting the communion table at church, and he saw the cross on the communion table. He had just begun to go to school and learn arithmetic—addition and subtraction—and when he saw the cross on the communion table, he said, Mother, what is that plus mark doing on the communion table, on that table up there? Of course, that plus mark was a cross, but I remind you that the cross is a plus mark. It is not negative. And Jesus has come that we might have incredibly bright, beautiful, and joyful life.

Now, the Bible does not tell us the names of the bride and groom. That's significant to me. Because had the Bible told us the names of the brides and grooms, that would have meant that they were significant people. But evidently, these were very common people whose names were not well known. Now, what does that tell us? That tells us that Jesus loves people like we are. Jesus loves ordinary people, and Jesus is involved in everyday issues. Here's the Lord of glory taking care of the refreshments at a party. That tells me that Jesus Christ wants to be with you on Thursday morning in the office just as well as He wants to be with you Sunday morning at church. That tells me that Jesus is interested in everyone, every day, and every circumstance. And yet, Jesus present there at that wedding turned what could have been a disaster into something delightful. And Jesus has a way of turning the monotonous to the momentous. And I see Jesus taking care of little things, small things. One of the most beautiful pictures of the Bible is not only Jesus turning water into wine, but Jesus preparing breakfast for the disciples. He is the Lord that cares about those things that concern you. So, that's the setting of the miracle—at a wedding. And here's the Lord of glory taking care of the mundane and yet bringing joy and happiness, because Jesus is indeed a joyful, joyful person.

II. The Symbolism of the Miracle

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: not only the setting of this miracle, but I want you to see the symbolism of it, because it is rich in symbolism. Look, if you will, in verse 6: "And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw some out now, and bear it unto the governor of the feast. And they bore it." Now, what is the symbolism of all of this? Jesus now is turning water into wine—verse 9: "And when the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

What is the symbolism of all this? Wine in the Bible is an emblem, a symbol, of joy. For example, you read in Psalm 104:15, "and wine that maketh glad the heart of man and oil to make his face shine and bread which strengthen man's heart." So God here speaks of oil and bread and wine as that which gives joy and strength. Now, I don't want us to get sidetracked here. I don't want us to get into a debate as to whether or not this was intoxicating wine or not. Personally, I don't believe that it was. As a matter of fact, the Bible warns against intoxicating wine in Proverbs chapter 23 and verses 31 and 32. Here's what God's Word clearly says: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright"—that is, when it is fermented. Now, obviously, if there is a time when it is fermented, there's a time when it is not fermented. And God calls unfermented grape juice, He also calls that wine. Now, listen to it—He says, concerning "that which moves itself aright," that which is fermented, "at the last it biteth like serpent and stingeth like an adder." Now, the joy and the refreshment that Jesus gives does not have a serpent in it. This was pure wine; it was not polluted wine. Intoxication is Satan's substitute for Jesus' joy.

Now, don't get the idea that, as some have erroneously said, people in that day did not know how to preserve grape juice without it fermenting. Dr. Driver, a noted scholar, said this—and I quote: "People of this day made a beverage something like apple cider by checking the fermentation. It was often used instead of water. The technical name was 'must'—m-u-s-t."

Now, wine is a symbol of joy. What about six water pots? Well, six is the number of a man. The Bible teaches us that in the book of the Revelation. These were earthen water jars; that is, they were made of clay, just as man is made of the dust of the earth. And so, here are these six water pots—they picture mankind. But now, these water pots are filled with water after the purification rituals of the Jews. Notice again what he says in

verse 6: “And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purification of the Jews.” That is, they were there for ritual cleansing.

Now, put your Bible mark there, if you will, and turn to Mark chapter 7 for a moment, and you’re going to understand something about the purification that these Jews went through before they would eat. Mark chapter 7, verse 1: “Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which come from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled—that is to say, with unwashed—hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.” As a matter of fact, I have read that the Jews of this day would wash their hands nine times to the elbows and let the water drip off their elbows before they would eat. And the idea was not sanitation; the idea here is ceremony. And the elders would not eat with unwashed hands. And verse 4: “And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?” Now, he doesn’t mean that their hands are not clean, but they have not gone through the ceremony of the washing of the hands. Now, notice what Jesus said in verse 6, “And he answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” So, here were these water pots. These water pots represented the traditional religion of the people: cold stone pots filled with ritualism, representing man with religion and yet without reality. Now, Jesus said to the servants, Fill these water pots. But he said, fill them to the brim. Why to the brim? Because Jesus said, I have come to fulfill the law. Not one jot or one tittle did Jesus fail to fulfill. All of the righteousness that the law required was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. That is, He fulfilled it to the full. Jesus, down to the last drop, fulfilled the law.

Now, the Lord Jesus says that these six water pots are filled to the brim; He says, now draw out and bear to the governor of the feast—that is, the master of ceremonies. Where did they draw the water from? Did they draw it from the six water pots? I think not. Those water pots are filled to the brim. They drew the water now from the well. The same well that had filled the water pots is now the well that has its water changed to wine, because what Jesus is saying is this: I am fulfilling the old and I am bringing in the new. You don’t need these six water pots any more; you now have the well. You now have me. I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly. You see, the wine that they had at the beginning of the feast was their best, but it was inferior. And not only was it inferior, but it was limited. And now Jesus is a well of joy, marked not only by quality, but by endless quantity. Draw out now, go to the well, bring

to the feast. At that wedding, therefore, there was wine enough and to spare.

You're going to find out that what our Lord is doing here is giving a graphic illustration of the theme verse in John 10, verse 10, where Jesus said, I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly. You see, the life that Jesus gives is abundant life. There was more than enough wine for the wedding. When Jesus fed the five thousand, there were twelve baskets full left over. When the prodigal son began to return to the father's house, he said, My father has bread enough, and to spare. So, when our Lord saves us, He does more than deliver us from hell; He gives us life abundant and free. He doesn't merely pardon our sin. The Bible says He will abundantly pardon.

If you had mistreated somebody, and said, would you please forgive me, and they said, well, that's all right, I forgive you, that is a pardon. But if they take you into their arms, and embrace you, and begin to lavish love upon you, that is an abundant pardon. That's the kind of pardon we have in our Lord: not only abundant pardon, but abundant provision. Our Lord, as this wine was abundant, abundantly blesses us. Jesus said, that you might have life abundantly. When I was preparing this message, my mind went to Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 20: "Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us." That's the symbolism here of this wine, that Jesus takes these stony hearts and these vessels of clay filled with meaningless ritual and religion, and Jesus, whether it was meaningless or meaningful, fulfilled it all, and then gives himself as the well of joy to each of us.

III. The Secret of the Miracle

Now, here's a third thing I want you to see. We've looked at the setting—it's at a wedding. We've looked at the symbolism, but I want you to look for a moment at the secret of this miracle. Look, if you will, in chapter two, verses three through five: "And when they lacked wine, his mother, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Now, let me just pause there to say this is the best advice that anybody ever gave anyone upon the face of the earth. It's the same advice that I'm going to give to you. If Jesus tells you to do something, do it. Whatever He tells you to do, do it, because that's the secret of a miracle.

Now, why should I obey the Lord Jesus Christ? Why should you learn instant, glad, full, free obedience? Why should we do what Mary told those servants to do—that is, whatever Jesus tells them to do, to do it? Number one: for your good. Look, if you will, in verses 7 to 9: "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled

them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear it unto the governor of the feast. And they bore it. And when the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine”—now, underscore this in your Bible if you don't mind underscoring it—“and knew not from where it was: (but the servants who drew the water knew).” Now, let me just pause right there to say that, if you want to be on the inside spiritually, become as servants. You see, the servants knew things that the master of the feast did not know; the master of ceremonies did not know what the servants knew. Why did they know and he not know? Because servants have a way of being on the inside.

Put this verse down—Amos chapter 3 and verse 7: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets.” Servants know secrets. That's true in the White House. That's true in the governor's mansion. That's true in the banker's office. It's definitely true in my office. I have an administrative assistant. Her name is Linda Glance. She reads all of my mail. When you write me, she'll read it first. And so, if you've got any secrets, I hope you understand that she's in on it. Unless you just simply write something on there to say, this is for his eyes only, because she'll read it. And when I talk to you, or dictate a letter, she will know what I'm thinking, and she'll know what I say to people, wherever they are. Why? She knows things that the Chairman of the Deacons doesn't know. She knows things that other people in the church who are high up don't know. Why? Not that she is a high-up official in the church, but because she is a servant.

Servants know things that other people do not know. Household servants know things about you that your neighbors don't know. Isn't that true? Some of them good, and some of them bad. But I'm going to tell you what Jesus said to those people who served Him. Listen. John 15:15: “Henceforth I call you not servants. For the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.” Servants have a way of becoming friends; they have a way of getting in the inner circle.

So, what is the secret of a miracle? It is to obey Jesus; whatever He says to do, do it. Why? For your good. Number two: for their gladness. When these servants obeyed the Lord Jesus, everybody at the party, at the feast, was blessed. Now, you know what you need to pray for me? You need to pray, “Lord, help Pastor to obey you,” because, if I obey Jesus, you will be blessed. If you obey Jesus, I will be blessed. You see, their obedience was not only for their good, but it was also for others' gladness. Others are made glad when we obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And, by the way, let me say this: that when our Lord does a miracle, He generally does it through somebody else. Now, our Lord could have without any human hands and without any human help performed that miracle. But He told those servants to fill those water jars. When the Lord Jesus was

ready to raise Lazarus from the grave, He told the servants to roll away the stone. God does His miracles through human instrumentality.

Now, why should they obey Him? What is the secret of a miracle? It's obedience. But why obey? Number one: for your good. Number two: for their gladness. Number three: for His glory. The Bible teaches that when this miracle was done, Jesus' glory was manifested. Look in verse 11: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth His glory." Now, how was His glory manifested? Well, a miracle was done. And we've said it speaks symbolically of the salvation that He gives.

But notice, His glory was manifested when people obeyed Him. Obedience to Him gives Him glory. Jesus said in Luke chapter 6, verse 46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" What right do we have to say that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, if we do not obey Him? When we do obey Him, we give Him glory, and that's what we exist for.

Now, Mary said, "Whatever He says to you, do it." When I thought this, I thought about Simon Peter out there, been fishing all night. The Lord Jesus from the shore called out, and said, "Have you caught anything?" He said, "We've toiled all night; we've taken nothing." Jesus said, "Cast out your nets on the other side." And Simon Peter said this: "Nevertheless." What does the nevertheless refer to? We've fished all night and taken nothing, "Nevertheless, at your word, I will." Now, Simon Peter was a commercial fisherman. He knew, humanly speaking, it would do no good. But he said, "Nevertheless, at thy word, I will."

May I challenge you tonight to make this the motto of your life.(?) Just simply let this be the motto of your life: at thy word, I will. That's what Simon Peter said. At Thy word, I will. That's what Mary told those servants: whatever He says to you, do it. You do not have to understand the command of God to obey that command. Don't parade it past the judgment bar of your reasoning to see if it makes sense or not. It may not make sense. Filling those water jars did not make sense. Throwing the net out on the other side of the boat did not make sense. Except, it made sense to Him.

IV. The Significance of the Miracle

Now, here is the fourth thing I want you to see: I want you to see the significance of this miracle. What is the significance? The significance is this: that Jesus is in the transformation business. He transforms worthless water into sparkling wine. And He's still in the transformation business. He is transforming people. Human beings like me, like you. Someone wisely said, "Nature forms us, sin deforms us, education informs us, penitentiaries reform us, but Jesus transforms us." He is a transformer, and He is changing now, by a miracle, water into sparkling wine.

I think of how He transformed Simon Peter, a blustering, big mouth, burly, smelly

fisherman into the flaming apostle of Pentecost. I think how He transformed the apostle John. The apostle John with a hair-triggered temper had a nickname, the Son of Thunder. The apostle John became the apostle of love. I think how He transformed Matthew, who was a tax gatherer, a tax collector, the Matthew who wrote the Gospel of Matthew. I think of how He transformed Mary, who was a demon-possessed harlot, to a herald of the resurrection. I think of how He transformed my own particular life. The miracle is the transformation business.

This afternoon I got on my knees with a grown man in his forties, put my arms around him and prayed as he gave His heart to Jesus Christ. He got down on his knees a sinner, got up a saved man on his way to heaven. Why? Because Jesus is in the transformation business. That is His business.

I heard of a man who was giving a testimony at a Salvation Army meeting. And it was one of those street meetings where they had the Salvation Army Band. This man was testifying in an open-air crowd. There was a heckler who said, “Why don’t you shut up and sit down? You’re just screaming.” That heckler felt a little girl pulling at his coattail, and she said, “Sir, may I speak to you?” That man who’s talking up there is my daddy. Daddy used to be a drunkard. He used to spend all of the money that he made on whiskey. My mother was very sad, and would cry most of the time. As a matter of fact, sometimes, when my daddy would come home, my daddy would hit my mother.” And she said, “I didn’t have shoes to wear; I didn’t have a nice dress to wear to school.” She said, “Look at these shoes. You see this pretty dress? My daddy bought this for me.” And said, “See my mother—she’s the one with the bright smile on her face. That’s my mother. My mother’s happy now.” She said, “My mother sings even when she’s doing the ironing.” And then, that little girl said, “Mister, if my daddy is dreaming, please don’t wake him up.”

Now, I like that story, because it illustrates for me so richly and so fully what I’m talking about: that the significance of this miracle is that Jesus is the transformer. The One that turned water into wine is the One that can change radically, dramatically, and eternally, any heart that will come to Him.

V. The Sequel to the Miracle

Now, here is the last thing I want us to see. And that’s the sequel to this miracle—the sequel to this miracle—because this miracle has some symbolic and some prophetic significance. Now, notice again, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 1: “and the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee”—the third day. Well, you know that the Holy Spirit can write many, many things; so why did the Holy Spirit say it was the third day? Well, I believe there is some symbolism here, and I believe there’s a hint of prophecy here, because since Jesus began these miracles, there have already been two days of

human history. You remember what Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 8? That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

I believe, folks, two thousand years have passed; that is, two days are gone, and we are on the threshold of the third day. I believe that that third day is about to dawn in all of its glory. And I believe that this wedding typifies and prefigures another wedding that is coming. And that is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and I'm looking forward to being there. When I get there, and you get there, I want to tell you the wine of joy will run freely, and His glory will be eminently manifested at that wedding feast. And you know, that's the way it is with Jesus: it just keeps getting better and better.

Notice again, in verse nine: "When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and knew not from where it was but the servants knew, the governor of the feast called the bridegroom and saith unto him, 'Every man at the beginning doeth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.'" It means, with Jesus, life is always getting better and better. Jesus gives the best last. Satan gives the best first. The Bible says concerning Satan's ways, "The bread of deceit is sweet, but afterward a man's mouth shall be filled with gravel." But if you know the Lord Jesus, you can say it, sing it, mean it, and know it: that every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.

I was walking through an alley behind a Sunday School. I did not go to Sunday School; my family did not attend church. It was Sunday morning. I was in the alley behind the Sunday School at Northwood Baptist Church. I heard them in there singing a song. They were singing this: "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before." And I was in my early teen years, but I said to myself, that is not true; that is impossible. Nothing can keep getting sweeter. I did not deny that it might be sweet to know Jesus, but in my heart and in my mind I said, that is not true. It is impossible for every day to be sweeter than the day before. But since I have been saved, I know it is absolutely possible; it is totally true.

And I want to say that I love the Lord Jesus Christ as much now, I believe, as I ever have in my life, and yet, I'm looking forward to loving Him more tomorrow. And I'm telling you that I am enjoying the wine of joy that Jesus pours out. You see, the devil gives the best first. That's the way it is with life. You start out in life as a child with the joy and wonder of childhood, and then as a youth, there's the vision and the enthusiasm of youth, and in manhood there's the strength of manhood. But then, about middle-age, you get into the battle of life, and the weariness of age, and things begin to deteriorate and run downhill, if you don't know the Lord. The devil doesn't have any happy old people. Have you noticed that?

A friend of mine, Dr. Jess Moody, wrote some interesting words, and I am going to quote them for you. He said, "I note that among other plans, Mrs. Madeline Murray

O'Hare, the famous atheist of Baltimore, Maryland, who reputedly made fun of churches for attempting to raise money, is trying to raise money. She plans the establishment of an atheist university, an atheist printing plant, and an atheist radio station. But the most interesting of her plans is a home for aged atheists. What do aged atheists have to talk about as they sit around to die? Do they discuss the legacy of morality, decency, integrity and spiritual sensitivity they have bequeathed to their children? Or the good atheism has done the world—the hospitals, orphanages, the elevation of womanhood, and the mass distribution of decent literature? Perhaps, they discuss the great bulwark against Communism that atheism has erected. And when the sun is sinking low, and when the conversation for the wheelchair atheist begins to lull, they can joyously contemplate their future. There is so much for an aged atheist to look forward to.” Then he concludes it with these words: “Old atheists never die; they just go to hell.” Think about it: without Jesus, it gets worse and worse and worse.

I'm telling you, folks, that when Jesus did His first miracle, it was a manifestation of His glory, but I can hardly wait for Him to come again. And soon and very soon, He's coming. Every pain and heartache we'll ever know, we'll know this side of the grave or this side of His coming again. Thank God that we are looking forward to His coming.

Conclusion

Now, let me close this message by saying that Jesus performed this miracle. He turned water into wine. But it was a miracle with a message that He is in the transformation business. And the miracles of grace are always greater than the miracles of glory. When Jesus turned water into wine, He did it with a word, but when He saved my soul, He hung on a cross. The greatest miracle is the miracle of the new birth. And John said, “Many other signs did Jesus, but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing you might have life through his name.

Would you bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. I told you that not long ago I prayed with a man—really, probably not even an hour ago. And he prayed and asked Christ to come into his heart. And he prayed a prayer like this: “Lord Jesus, I need you and I want you. I believe you died for my sins. I believe God raised you from the dead. And now I open my heart, and I receive you as my Lord and Savior. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on your Word. I trust you to save me.” If you have never done that, why don't you do it right now? Why don't you pray right now where you are? Lord Jesus...—pray it—Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. And save me, Lord Jesus. Lord, help me to make it public. Help me not to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

The Transforming Power of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 10, 1982

Main Scripture Text: John 2:1–11

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”

JOHN 2:11

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to turn now to the Gospel of John. And we're going to be in the Gospel of John now for our next seven messages on Sunday morning, except perhaps some interlude where God may intervene or tell us otherwise. But we're going to be bringing seven messages, seven miracles, in the Gospel of John. And I want us to look now in John chapter 2, the first miracle that Jesus ever performed.

You know, there are some people who say that Jesus performed miracles as a child, and so forth. Oh no, this is the first one right here, and we can read it. I'm reading here John chapter 2 and verse 1: *“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have*

no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” Now if you understand the idiom in which Jesus is speaking, He’s not being harsh or disrespectful. Jesus honored His mother. And so it loses a little in the translation, but what Jesus is just simply saying is, what affair is that of yours right now? *“His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a piece.”* That is really about 120 gallons. *“Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk,”*—that is, when they have sated their appetites—*“then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”* (John 2:1–11)

I want to speak to you today about “The Transforming Power of Christ.” And the same Jesus that turned water into wine can transform your home, can transform your life, can transform your family, can transform your future. That same Jesus is still in the miracle-working business. And His business is the business of transformation. Someone has well said that nature forms us, sin deforms us, penitentiary reforms us, education informs us, the world conforms us, but only Jesus transforms us. And that’s what we’re going to be thinking about today: the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ as He turned water into wine.

Now before we get into this, let me just give you a setting for the entire series. I want you to turn to John 20. Do as Brother Tommy said about the hymnal: just put your finger there in John 2 and just go forward with me to John 20, verses 30 and 31, and I want you to see the significance of this miracle. John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31. Now the Bible says in verse 30, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.”* Now the word *sign* is an interesting word. It’s a word that means “miracle.” But the word *semeion* means “a miracle with a message and a miracle with a meaning.” Not just a miracle, but there’s a lesson in the miracle. I believe G. Campbell Morgan said that every parable that Jesus gave was a miracle of instruction, and every miracle that Jesus performed was a parable for our instruction. I like that. And there is a meaning in the miracle. Now John said, “many of these miracles Jesus did.” Look, if you will, please, in verse 31: *“But these are written,”*—these miracles—*“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:30–31)

Now therefore John, as he was directed by the Holy Spirit, chose seven miracles. Now Jesus did many more, but John chose seven significant miracles that Jesus performed, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing that Jesus is the Christ, we might have life through His name. Are you interested in life?

And incidentally, Jesus came not for death, but for life. It was here at a wedding that Jesus performed this miracle that we're going to study this morning, it was a feast. I read in the Bible where Jesus broke up several funerals but He never broke up a feast. And don't think of Him as the pale Galilean who has come to take all of the joy out of your life. Jesus said in John 10, verse 10, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

Jesus wants to give you abundant life, as we're going to see in a moment. And so here it was at a wedding—not a funeral, but at a wedding feast—that Jesus performed His first miracle. And what a lesson that ought to be. But all of these miracles, beginning with the turning of the water into wine, right on through, as we're going to see—all seven of them—were for a particular purpose: that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ. And when we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we will receive life through His name. And so the name of our series is this: "A Parade of Miracles."

And incidentally, in and out through this series we're going to be asking some of you to come up here and tell about a miracle that God has done in your life. It may be a physical miracle, the healing of a body. It may be a financial miracle, where the Lord has provided for your need. It may be a domestic miracle, where God has healed your home and saved your marriage. It may be a social miracle, where the Lord has helped you in your relationship with someone else. We're going to be dealing with all of the miracles of our great God that show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, as we study this parade of miracles.

As I was thinking about this, I'm reminded of the old Burma Shave signs. Some of you youngsters don't know what a Burma Shave sign is, but Burma Shave was, or is—I don't know whether they still have it or not—a form of shaving lather. And they used to advertise it primarily on the highways in the olden days. There would be a succession of small signs that would be stuck on sticks, and there would one, and then another about a quarter of a mile, and then another about a quarter of a mile, and then another and another and another—and they would say something. And you had to read each one before you got to the conclusion. They were little poems, pure doggerel, but poetry and such. I remember reading one: "A peach looks good with lots of fuzz, but a man's not a peach, and never was." And then it would say, "Burma Shave." And you would get a portion of this sign as you would go down; you'd read this one, and then this one, and then this one, and then finally at the end it would say, "Burma Shave."

Well, that idea is old—two thousand years old. That's what John is doing. John is

giving us a series of signs. And then at the end of the signs, it doesn't say, "Burma Shave"; it says, "Jesus Christ, Son of God." That's what he's talking about. And so we're going to be studying together what we call "A Parade of Miracles." And I pray God at the conclusion of what we do today, you'll say, "Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, He is the Son of God. Furthermore, He has become my Savior. And furthermore, I have life, wonderful life, through His name." And those of you who already know Him, my prayer is that you'll know Him better, love Him more dearly, and see Him more clearly, and follow Him more nearly, and know even a more abundant life than you know right now.

Now you know the story that I just read to you. Let's go back to John chapter 2. Jesus was at a wedding, and there was a time of embarrassment, because the refreshments had run out. And I want you to think about the word *refreshments*. This was not intoxicating wine. Incidentally, in one of our Wednesday night contemporary issues, we're going to be dealing with the subject of the Christian's relation to beverage alcohol. Remember that the word *wine* in the Bible may mean that which is intoxicating, and it may mean that which is not intoxicating. For example, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 23, "*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*" That is, when it is fermented, God says, "Leave it alone." Because God says, concerning that wine, "*At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*" (Proverbs 23:31–32)

Now Jesus didn't serve something with a serpent in it—you can believe that. There's no serpent in the refreshment that Jesus served, only joy. You see, beverage alcohol is the devil's substitute, Satan's substitute, for Jesus' joy. But Jesus was there, and the refreshments ran out at this party. And so there was a time of embarrassment.

I don't even know who the bride and groom were. They're not mentioned—a nameless couple. And it seems like a small thing. But I'm so glad that Jesus did a small thing for a nameless couple. Why? That tells me that He is the Christ for everybody and the Christ for every circumstance. Isn't that wonderful? And He's just as interested in you on Tuesday morning as He is this Sunday morning. And He's interested in everybody. He's interested in everything. What a wonderful, wonderful Savior! What a sympathetic Savior we have! And what a dear, marvelous, wonderful Savior!

And so the Lord Jesus Christ moved in to take care of this embarrassing situation. There were six water pots there. He said to the servants, "Fill them with water." They did. He said, "Draw out now." And when they drew out, no longer water but wine; and not ordinary wine, the very best. As a matter of fact, the governor of the feast, the master of ceremonies, said, "I never tasted anything like this." He said, "This is a strange party. Generally, people bring the best out first, but," he said to the bridegroom, "you saved the best for the last."

And let me just say parenthetically, but not necessarily incidentally, Jesus always

gives the best last. Did you know that? He always does. The devil gives the best first. You see, “The bread of deceit is sweet, but afterwards a man’s mouth shall be filled with gravel.” (Proverbs 20:17) And the wine and the cup look so sparkling—I’m talking about the wrong kind. You know, it moves itself aright—there it is. You know, the most beautiful ads in the papers are what? The liquor ads, aren’t they? They make it look so good, but *“at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”* The devil gives the best first and the worst last. Jesus gives the best last. And the longer you serve Jesus, the sweeter He grows. And the joy of the Lord, it maketh full and bringeth no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22)

Jesus doesn’t give any hangovers, friend. I want to tell you, I’m so glad that He does. I’m so glad that every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. And we can even look forward to heaven where the Apostle Paul said, *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”* (2 Timothy 4:8) It gets better and better. And the longer you serve Him, the sweeter He grows. Jesus gives the best last, and so Jesus worked a miracle that day. It was a miracle of transformation as we turned water into wine.

And there are three major lessons I want us to see: the first one, moderately short; the second one, a little longer; and the third one will be the major, major lesson that I want us to deal with. First of all, as we look at this story, I want us to learn a lesson of prophecy as it deals with the Second Coming, the prophetic lesson as it deals with the Second Coming. Secondly, I want us to see the practical lesson as it deals with service. And, thirdly, I want us to see the personal lesson as it deals with salvation. I believe all of those are right here in this miracle this morning as we study it together.

I. The Prophetic Lesson Concerning the Second Coming

Now, first of all, I believe there is a prophetic lesson as it deals with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, He was the Messiah of Israel, but they didn’t recognize Him. Go back to chapter 1 here for just a moment. John had been preaching, John the Baptist, and had been baptizing, but they did not recognize who Jesus was. And I’m talking about the Pharisees. Read John 1, beginning in verse 24: *“And they which were sent were of the Pharisees...”*—that is, there was a committee coming out to investigate old John the Baptist—*“And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ,”*—that is, the Messiah— *“nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not.”* (John 1:24–26)

A. The Messiah They Did Not Recognize

Now Jesus was right there, but they didn't recognize it. So the first thing I want you to notice, as we think of the dispensational, or prophetic nature, is this: the Messiah they did not recognize. He was there. The Lord Jesus was right there, but they did not know Him. They should have known Him. They could have known Him. They ought to have known Him. But they didn't know Him.

B. The Miracle They Did Not Understand

All right, the Messiah they did not recognize, and therefore the miracle that they did not understand. When Jesus performed this miracle, it was more than to provide refreshments for a party. It was a miracle with a message, and it was a manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it looked forward to that future time when the Lord Jesus shall sit upon the throne of His glory. It will look forward to that Marriage Supper of the Lamb when He Himself is the heavenly bridegroom and we are the bride, and we eat that marriage feast up there. And you talk about refreshments! Dear friend, what Jesus did there on that day is but a foregleam of what He will do for His saints throughout all of the ages. But they didn't understand this miracle. They didn't understand. As a matter of fact, at the last of chapter 2 here, the Bible says they were following Him. Some people followed Him because of the miracles which He did. But the Bible says, "*Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*" (John 2:24–25)

C. The Marriage That They Missed

Oh, listen: the Messiah that they did not recognize; the miracle that they did not understand; and then, dear friend, the marriage that they missed—not that marriage, but the Marriage of the Lamb. Oh, it's so close. Jesus is even at the door. You say, "I've heard that before." I want to tell you, friend, that we are living in the closing days of this dispensation. My heart is telling me; preachers across the land are preaching it; God is giving a consciousness to His body, the church, that we are living in the closing days of this dispensation. Notice chapter 2, verse 1. The Bible says, "*And the third day there was a marriage*"—the third day.

Now you know Peter tells us that "*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years.*" (2 Peter 3:8) I believe that two days of human history have passed since Jesus Christ first came. I believe we're close to that third day right now. I really do. I believe that the third day of the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ is right here: that thousand years where Jesus is going to rule and reign here upon this earth as Lord of lords and King of kings.

II. The Practical Lesson Concerning Servants

There is a prophetic lesson, I believe, as it deals with the Second Coming. But, oh, there is a practical lesson as it deals with servants. There were some servants there that day. And I want you to continue to read with me and look, if you will, in verse 5: *“His mother saith unto the servants,”*—are you a servant of Jesus? Look up here. Are you a servant of Jesus? Nod your head this way. Are you? Okay now, do you want me to give you some advice? I’ll guarantee I’m going to give you the best advice you’ve ever heard in all of your life. You say, “That’s pretty arrogant.” I’m sure I’m right; absolutely sure I’m right. Are you a servant of Jesus? Here’s the advice—*“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”* Amen? Wasn’t that good advice? Wasn’t that good advice? I’ll tell you, that’s good advice. *“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”* Do it. There is a practical lesson concerning service. *“Whatsoever he saith unto you,”*—if you’re His servant—*“do it.”* Why? Three reasons: for your good, for their gladness, for His glory.

A. For Your Good

Now, notice: for your good. “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Now everything He tells you to do is going to be a blessing to you in some way, some fashion. How was it a blessing to these people? Well, they were there; the servants were there. Mary said to the servants, “Whatever Jesus says, do it.” And now, notice what He told them to do in verse 6: *“And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.”* Now they are obeying. They’re doing exactly, precisely, with no stutter, no stammer, no apologies, no question, what Jesus told them to do.

Now, notice in verse 9: *“When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, he knew not whence it was: (but the servants...knew).”* Now, what is the blessing of obeying the Lord? Intimacy with Him. Knowing things that you could never know any other way. Do you know something? You’re saying, “Brother Rogers, I just don’t understand things. The Bible is a closed book to me. I can’t understand spiritual truth. How is it that some people seem to know so much and some other people seem to know so little?” Do you want me to tell you how? Become a servant. Listen. Those servants know things that the big shots at the head table didn’t know. Did you know that? The high muckety-mucks sitting up there at the head table. Even the bride and the groom didn’t know what the servants knew. It’s amazing what you can learn if you’re willing to be a servant.

Do you know what the Lord Jesus said? He said in John 15, verse 15—I want you to put it in your margin—*“Henceforth I call you not servants”*—now they were, but He

didn't call them servants—*“for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”* (John 15:15) You see, the servant becomes the friend, and the friend knows all things—Jesus. When we become His servants, become His intimates. And the Bible says in Amos chapter 3, verse 7, *“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret to his servants.”* (Amos 3:7) Isn't that beautiful? God reveals His secrets to His servants. What a blessing there is in service that we know the most intimate things about our dear Lord and we have knowledge!

Some of you have come only so far in your Christian life and you've stopped growing; and the reason you've stopped growing is you've stopped obeying. Some of you need believer's baptism, but you've refused to be baptized. I don't know why, but you've refused. And then you read another verse, and you say, “Lord, I've read that one about baptism: I'm not going to do that. But now, show me what *this* means.” And God says, “I'm not going to show you.” “What, Lord? You're not going to show me what your Word says?” “Absolutely not!” “Why not, Lord?” “I've already shown you about baptism. You won't do that. Why should I show you anything else?”

Listen, friend. The way to understand the Scripture that you don't know is to obey the Scripture you know. Did you know that? The Bible says, “To him that hath shall be given. But to him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which you have.” (Matthew 13:12; Matthew 25:29; Luke 19:26) And you're going to stop dead in your tracks in your growth in your understanding of the Word of God until you start to obey. For your understanding, for your good, you ought to obey. The servants that day knew something no one else knew, because they were servants. That's the way to grow; that's the way to have an insight into the heart and mind of God: to obey the Lord. The servants knew. For your goodness. They knew.

B. For Their Gladness

But not only for your goodness; for their gladness. You know, the party was getting dull. The refreshments had worn out. But when these people started to obey the Lord, when the servants did, everybody else got blessed. Let me tell you something. Did you know that when I obey God, I'll be a blessing to you? When you obey God, you'll be a blessing to me. You cannot obey God without your obedience spilling out in a blessing to all those around about you. When we obey God, we make those around about us glad. When you disobey God, you break the hearts of those around about you. Some of you are breaking the hearts of your father, your mother, your wife, your husband, because you are disobeying God rather than letting the wine of gladness and the joy of Jesus be made manifest through you.

C. For His Glory

Why obey Him? Number one: for your good. Number two: for their gladness. Number three: for His glory. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory.”* He manifested His glory. When people obey the Lord Jesus Christ, when they do what Jesus tells them to do, He is thereby glorified. Jesus said, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46) Not only do you fail to bring Him glory; you dishonor Him. You bring disgrace and disrepute upon the name of Jesus when you do not obey Him. But when you obey Him, then He works in your heart and in your life, and the result is glory to God.

Now, obey Him, whether you can understand it or not. These servants had no way of knowing what Jesus was going to do. It might have seemed silly to them to fill those water pots with water. It wasn't a matter of whether they understood it or not, just that He told them to do it. *“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”*

Now a lot of times your twentieth-century mind is going to say, “Well, that's old-fashioned. That doesn't make sense. That's not practical.” Friend, never come to the Bible that way. Never parade the Bible across the judgment bar of your reason. *“Whatever he saith unto you, do it.”*

You remember Simon Peter was a commercial fisherman. He was out there on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was watching by the shore. They didn't know it was Jesus at first. He said, “Hi, you caught anything?” He said, “Man,”—sounds like me—“we fished all night; we haven't taken anything. Nothing.” Jesus said, “Well, cast your net on the other side of the boat.” Peter said, “Look, we've fished all night and we've taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word I will.” (Luke 5:5) That would be a great motto for every one of us this coming year. “At thy word, I will”—whether you understand it or not. Now what ol' Pete was saying was, “There are no fish over here. We've fished all night. We know every square inch of this lake; it's not all that big; but because you say so, I will.” They caught a load of fish so big they couldn't drag it in. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, don't parade it past the judgment bar of your reason. Just *“whatever he saith unto you, do it.”*

A missionary, an old retired missionary, was given the job of examining candidates for missionary service. And so, one snowy morning at five in the morning, a candidate showed up at the missionary's house. He had to wait until eight to see the missionary. He sat there in the living room on a frigidly cold morning. After a while, the old missionary came down, looked at him, and said, “Well, I want to ask you several questions. First of all, can you spell?” He said, “Well, yes sir.” He said, “Okay, spell baker.” He said, “*b-a-k-e-r.*” He said, “Thank you.” He said, “Now, do you know the rudiments of math?” “Yes sir, I think so.” He said, “All right, what is two plus two?”

“Well,” he said, “why, four, sir.” “Thank you. That’s all. You’re dismissed.” And the young man went away.

The next day, the missionary went back to the society and said, “I want to recommend this young man for service on the mission field. He’s just the man that we’re looking for. I tested him on self-denial by having him arrive at five in the morning on a cold, snowy day when he had to get out of a warm bed and a warm house.” He said, “Also, I tested him on promptness, because he arrived on time.” He said, “Thirdly, I tested him on patience. I made him wait three hours, and he waited three hours to see me. Fourthly,” he said, “I tested him on temper, because he was not arrogant and he failed to show any aggravation at having to wait.” And he said, “Last of all, I tested him on humility, because I asked him questions that a seven-year-old could answer, and he answered them forthright. He’s the man that we’re looking for.”

You may not understand why God tells you to do something. You may not understand the seemingly small commands of the Lord. But God knows what He’s doing, ladies and gentlemen. And listen. There’s a practical lesson here, and it is a lesson on service. Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it for His glory. I don’t know, but I just believe that water never would have turned into wine unless those people had filled those water pots; that Lazarus would not have come out of that grave unless there were some there to roll away the stone; that five thousand would not have been fed unless there was a little boy there that gave his lunch on that day. You see, I don’t know what God is going to do through you, and I don’t know what God wants to do through this church, but when God performs a miracle, He still will do it through human instrumentality. That doesn’t take the miraculous out of it. It is just God’s formula for a miracle.

Listen to me, ladies and gentlemen: “*Whatever he saith unto you, do it.*” Do it. Do it! For your good, for their gladness, for His glory, do it. Will you do it? You’ll be a servant of the Lord. And the Lord will get into the transformation business, and He’ll be transforming lives. He’ll transform this community when this church says, “Yes sir, whatever you say to me, Lord Jesus, I’ll do.” He’ll transform your home. He’ll transform your personal life. “*Whatever he saith unto you, do it.*” There’s a practical lesson concerning service.

III. The Personal Lesson Concerning Salvation

But let’s go on and conclude this message. Not only is there a prophetic lesson, I believe, concerning the Second Coming; and a practical lesson concerning service; but there’s a personal lesson concerning salvation. You see, I believe here we also have a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ transforming lives and saving lives. And just as Jesus turned that worthless water into sparkling wine, the Lord Jesus Christ can transform and

change your life and save you today if you've never been saved. Look again in verse 6, and I want you to see the symbolism that is there: *"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece."*

A. **The Meaning of It**

Now, notice, six. Six is the number of a man. These were water pots of stone—more aptly, of clay. That's the way they made pots of that day. Now they, to me, symbolized man made of the dust of the earth, man formed from the dust of the ground. They were dry. They were hard. They were brittle. They were empty. They were used for ceremony. But these people needed more than ceremony. They were used for the washing of hands. Not to get the dirt off. That wasn't it. It was ceremonially to wash their hands. They would wash their hands nine times to the elbows with the water dripping off the elbows. It was a ritual, a form that they went through. But the problem was not with their hands; it was with their heart. It was not physical dirt; it was spiritual defilement that they had. It was not a matter of ritual; it was a matter of reality that they needed. And here were these people: they were religious, but they were lost.

It will be a great day when man stops enduring religion and starts enjoying salvation. There are a lot of people who will trudge to church this Sunday. They will rise and sing, and they will give their money, and they will go through the form, and they will go through the ritual; but they will be lost. *"Six waterpots...after the manner of the purifying of the Jews,"* representing man and his ritual, man and his ceremony, but man in his lostness, man without Christ, who is the water of life.

Then these water pots are filled with water. What is water a symbol of? It's a symbol of the Word of God. Have you ever heard of *"the washing of water by the word"*? (Ephesians 5:26) Have you read where Isaiah said, "Is not my Word like the rain that cometh down from heaven?" (Isaiah 55:10–11) And all throughout the Old Testament, water has been used symbolically of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. And so here these old, hard, empty vessels are filled with water.

And incidentally, dear friend, I cannot save you. But one thing I'm trying to do today is pour you full of water. Did you know that? Oh, that's my job. I can be faithful to put the Word of God into you. That's what I'm doing. I am depending upon Jesus to perform the miracle. But I've got His water, I've got His Word, and I'm filling those pots right now, getting ready for a miracle, getting ready for a transformation. And so here are these empty pots finding that ritual is not enough, religion is not enough. It takes reality. It's not the hands; it's the heart. It's not the outward; it's the inward.

Do you know what wine represents? Joy. The Bible speaks of *"wine that maketh glad the heart of man."* (Psalm 104:15) Jesus is about to show that it is inward, not outward. That it is reality that comes through transformation. And so when these empty

water pots are filled with water and then touched by the omnipotent finger of God, a transforming miracle takes place. And that's precisely, ladies and gentlemen, what needs to happen to you. You need the joy of the Lord that comes through the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. The Miracle of It

And, oh, such joy there is! Such joy there is! You see, the meaning of it is transformation. The miracle of it—only Jesus can do it. When a person is saved, it is a miracle. That's what Tommy sang about; that's what Elmer sang about: "When He saved my soul, when He made me whole, it took a miracle of love and grace." When Jesus turned water into wine, He did it like that. But when He saved me, He hung on a cross in order to do it. Oh, what a miracle! What a miracle! What a miracle—that Jesus can transform you!

C. The Measure of It

But notice not only the meaning of it, the miracle of it; notice the measure of it. He turned 120 gallons of water to wine. Now I don't know what kind of party they had, but they didn't need 120 gallons. What was He showing? He was showing again John 10:10. What is it? "I have come that you might have life, and have it"—how?—"abundantly." Oh, He's able to do exceeding abundantly more than you can ask or think. (Ephesians 3:20)

There's more, so much more. He doesn't just deliver us from hell. Thank God He does that. But there's so much more. Oh, when that prodigal got ready to go to his father's house there in Luke chapter 15, what did He say about his father's house? "My father has bread enough and"—what?—"to spare." (Luke 15:17) Listen. When Jesus fed the five thousand, there were twelve baskets full left over. "Out of His riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again."

Conclusion

If people understood what they had in the Lord Jesus Christ, you couldn't keep them away with a machine gun. Really. They just don't understand. Sin blinds, and they don't understand the fullness of joy. At His right hand is fullness of joy. (Psalm 16:11) The meaning of it: transformation. The miracle of it: when the Word of God is touched by the hand of God, there's a miracle. The measure of it: there's fullness of joy. Life, an abundant life. And, ladies and gentlemen, it is yours through Jesus Christ.

Don't be like those Pharisees so long ago who were religious but lost, who were enduring religion without enjoying salvation. Come to Jesus and trust Him. *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* (Isaiah 1:18)

Three Miracle Births

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: John 3

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

JOHN 3:3

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Introduction

Love the music at Christmas, and thank you, young gentlemen, and thank you, ladies. Would you take God's precious Word and be finding, please, John chapter 3. Right away, you remember that that is a very significant chapter in the Word of God, and one that, if you've been a Christian very long, you are very, very familiar with. It's one of the favorite chapters in all of the Bible. John chapter 3, and when you have it, leave it open there in your lap, and look up here, and let me tell you what happened to a friend of mine. He was in the waiting room about to hear the news about the birth of his firstborn. Now, you ladies don't know what we men go through out there in that waiting room. It's

awful. And he was out there, waiting, you know, for that news, when the doors burst open, and the doctor came out with his hands up in the air, saying, It's a miracle! It's a miracle! He said, Oh, oh, what has happened? Have we had triplets? What, doctor? What is a miracle? Tell me. He said, Human birth is a miracle. You think about it. How a little baby is conceived in his mother's womb and out of that tiny egg and sperm comes a beautiful baby—a miracle!

I want to talk to you today about the miracle of birth. As a matter of fact, I want to talk to you about three miracle births. I want to talk to you about **the sinner's birth**—that's our birth; I want to talk to you about **the Savior's birth**; and I want to talk to you about **the second birth**. All three of them are miracles. Begin to read here in verse 1: "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, the same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily,"—and whenever Jesus says verily, verily, that means pay attention—"Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Now, Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews whose very name means superior. He was an educated man, he had risen above his fellows, he was a leader among leaders, and he had seen Jesus do miracles or at least had heard about the miracles that Jesus had done, and so he was concerned and intrigued about these miracles, and he came to Jesus at a nighttime episode, and said, I know that you are a teacher sent from God, for no man can do the miracles that you do unless God is with him. Now, he wanted to talk about miracles, but Jesus talked to him about births. It's a very interesting thing, because the truth of the matter is a birth is a miracle. It is the greatest miracle.

Now, there are three births that are mentioned in the first three verses, if you read carefully. First of all, there was a man of the Pharisees—that's Nicodemus. He had a natural birth. Number two, the same came to Jesus by night, and wanted to talk to Jesus about births, and miracles, and that's really going to speak about the second birth, or the birth of the Lord Jesus—"we know thou art a teacher come from God"—that's the Savior's birth. And then, in verse 3, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"—that is the second birth. So three wonderful births are mentioned here.

I. The Problem of the Sinner's Birth

Let's talk a little bit about the sinner's birth—your birth, my birth. Here was a man in verse 1. He was born into the natural world. He speaks of it in verse 4: "Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Nicodemus said, I've already been there and done that. I have come out of my mother's womb. That is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. No man is going to be born physically. Twice he could not understand that. Well, Jesus, says in verse 7, "Nicodemus, I'm not talking about a repetition of your first birth; I'm talking about a different kind altogether." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."

A. He Was Born into the Natural World

Let me tell you three things about Nicodemus' birth. Number one, he was born into the natural world—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

B. He Was Bound to the Sinful World

But, number two, because he was born into the natural world, he was bound to the sinful world. Now, why'd he say that? Because when any man, woman, boy or girl is born into the natural world, they are born with a sinful nature. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, "We are by nature"—by nature—"the children of wrath." That precious little baby that's born into your family, you may think that's a little angel sent from heaven, but you let that little angel grow up without discipline and he'll black your eye. That little child was conceived with a sinful nature. David said, in Psalm 51, verse 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity." That meant that sin was on the inside of me when I was born, and again, Jesus told Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

This morning I was reading in the Scripture what the flesh is like. Now, we're talking about the flesh; we're talking about what we got from our first parents, the natural inclinations from our first parents. Listen to Galatians 5, verses 19 to 21—if you want to know what the works of the flesh are like, if you want to know what's in your heart, if you want to know what you're capable of, here it is: "Now, the works of the flesh are manifest which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,"—that means unbridled lust—"idolatry,"—that means putting anything ahead of God—"witchcraft,"—that means consorting with the occult—"hatred, variance, emulations,"—that means the stirring up of distasteful things—"wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like." That's what Nicodemus got when he was born of the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You say, Well, Pastor Rogers, I haven't done all of those things. No, you probably haven't, but you have the flesh on the inside. It's not the amount of sin that condemns us; it's the fact of

sin. More people—more people—drown in nine feet of water than in ninety feet of water. If a man is a sinner, he's a sinner. The Bible says, if we keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all. But even though you may not have done these things, the problem is not what a man does; the problem is what a man is. A man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he's a sinner. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. The problem is the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

I'm glad we have these missionary parents here today, so grateful for them. I heard of a missionary family that moved to a missionary house on the compound in a foreign country; they'd never been there—in very primitive conditions. And this woman who had been raised in very proper conditions looked at the floor in that missionary dwelling, and it was absolutely filthy. First thing she decided she would do would be to scrub the floor, so she got her some soap suds, and got a big bristle brush, and got down on her hands and knees, and began to scrub that floor. She would scrub it, and rinse—it would still be dirty. She scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed, and finally threw up her hands in desperation, and decided she would never be able to get that floor clean. Somebody came in and explained to her why she could not get the floor clean: it was a dirt floor! And what she was doing was simply scrubbing a dirt floor, and the more she scrubbed, the more dirt came up. And that's the way our nature is.

You know, we have the idea that we can clean up our nature, but, folks, the problem is what we are, and there's no way that you can clean up a sinful nature.

C. He Was Blind to the Spiritual World

Here was a man who was born into the natural world, and, therefore, he was bound to the sinful world, and, therefore, he was blind to the spiritual world. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." And that's true. Here was a man who was a master in Israel. He had many degrees, but he was blind to spiritual things. He couldn't understand them. I may be speaking today to some PhDs, I may be speaking today to some lawyers or doctors or school teachers or entrepreneurs, or people who were tops in their class—and if you have education, I'm grateful for it, and you're to be commended for it, and the Bible does not discourage study—but I want to say that all of that cannot help you to see spiritual things. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see."

Here's the way the Bible describes a man born into the natural world. In Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18, it says he has the understanding darkened: "He is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart. His heart is blind. He may have twenty-twenty vision, he may have intelligence, but he's ignorant of the things of God. Now, there are certain things that you can never know until God the Holy Spirit turns the light on in your soul. That's the reason, folks, that

when I preach, I try to pray as I did this morning. I get on my knees and pray before I walk out of that door and come out here, because I know this—I know that I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. Did you know that I can preach absolute truth and a person could sit out there and not understand one spiritual word of it? They may get the words, but they'll never get the music, unless the Holy Spirit of God turns the light on in their soul, unless the Holy Spirit of God enlightens them. You see, it takes more than light; it takes sight. It takes sight. And a person in a room full of light, if he's blind, he still cannot see. And so, here was a man—he was born into the natural world, he was bound to the sinful world, he was blind to the spiritual world. That's the sinner's birth. This is Nicodemus. Now, he was a very fine man, he was a superior man, he was a ruler of the Jews, but he was only a natural man, and the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

II. The Purpose of the Savior's Birth

Now, let's look at a second birth. Nicodemus comes to Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 2: "The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Well, he was right, but he wasn't completely right. Jesus was a teacher come from God, but he was more than a teacher come from God; he was God come to teach. He was God in human flesh. Now, Nicodemus did not understand this at first, that the Lord Jesus was virgin-born, and so Jesus begins to talk with him about his own birth. And I want you to see what he talks about, not only the problem of the sinner's birth, but the purpose of the Savior's birth. What was the purpose of the Savior's birth? Well, begin to read in verse 14. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, and Jesus says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,"—that is, die and go to hell—"but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him"—that is, in God's only begotten Son—"should not perish but have everlasting life, for God sent not his Son into the world...—now that's the Savior's birth—"for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. 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."

A. It Was a Ministry of Redemption

Now, why did Jesus Christ come to this earth? Why the first Christmas? What is the purpose of the Savior's birth? Well first of all, it was a ministry of redemption. The Bible says that we should be redeemed, that we should be saved, that whosoever believes in him should have everlasting life. You see, there were people like Nicodemus, born into

the natural world, a sinner by nature, a sinner by birth, a sinner by practice, a sinner by choice, a sinner under condemnation, a sinner deserving judgment, a sinner on the way to hell. But God sent His Son, not to condemn the world, but to save the world, in a ministry of redemption. That's the reason that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Why the virgin birth? Is that incidental? No! It's fundamental. You take away the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, you take away the very foundation of Christianity. The whole house of Christianity collapses like a house of cards without the virgin birth. Why? You see, had Jesus been born like Nicodemus was born, he would have been born into the natural world, he would've been bound to the sinful world, he would've been blind to the spiritual world, because he would've inherited the sin of Adam. And the Bible says, "In Adam all die." Jesus was God manifest in the flesh, and so Jesus came out of heaven into this world through the portals of a virgin's womb. And so, Jesus did not have the nature of Adam; Jesus had the nature of His Father in heaven, Almighty God.

Now, had Jesus been born of Adam, Jesus would have been a sinner. Had Jesus been a sinner, he could've been no sacrifice for sin. The only sin he could've died for was His own. He could not have died for mine, because he would not have been a substitute and an innocent sacrifice. 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 on the cross. He died on the cross to do what he did, and that is to save me. He became what he was—the Son of Man—that I might become now a Son of God. He was born of a virgin that I might be born again. He was born once that I might be born twice. He came to earth that I might go to heaven. He became a Son of Man that I might become a son of God. That's why Jesus was born of a virgin. He came to redeem us, and apart from the virgin birth, there's no sinless sacrifice; no sinless sacrifice, no redemption; no redemption, no hope. Thank God for the virgin birth. "God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

B. It Was a Ministry of Revelation

And so, in the Savior's birth, He came as a ministry of redemption. But not only did He come in a ministry of redemption; He came in a ministry of revelation, that we might know God. Look, if you will, in verse 19: "and this is the condemnation: that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deed should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light." You see, He came not only in a ministry of redemption, but a ministry of revelation. Jesus coming into the world was to give light, to help us to understand God. There's no way that you can know God apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes unto the Father but by me"—through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Helen Keller—if you've ever read the story of Helen Keller, you know it's a beautiful story. Helen Keller was a little girl who was born both blind and deaf. How would you like to have a baby both blind and deaf, a baby that you loved with all of your heart, but the baby could not see and the baby could not hear? Can you imagine being a creature both blind and deaf? To be deaf—you could still see—or to be blind—you could still hear; but to be both blind and deaf. Now, it was worse on the mother than the little baby, because this was the mother's baby, and the mother of Helen Keller said, Oh, my precious child, my precious child, your mother loves you so much, but precious little thing, how can I let you know? Well, you know there came that breakthrough when they learned how to communicate with Helen Keller, and that's a wonderful story, but folks, let me tell you this: God, in a sense, had the same kind of a problem. He said, My precious child, I love you so much. How can I make you know how much I love you? Jesus is the answer to that problem. He came to reveal God, to reveal the heart of God, the mind of God, the love of God.

C. It Was a Ministry of Restoration

You see, why the Savior's birth? It was a ministry of redemption. Why the Savior's birth? It was a ministry of revelation. Why the Savior's birth? It was a ministry of restoration—that we might be born again, that we might be what God made us to be to begin with.

III. The Promise of the Second Birth

Now, here's the third thing I want you to look at. We said the sinner's birth; we've all had that—we've been there; we've done that. We were born into the natural world; we're bound to the sinful world; we're blind to the spiritual world. The Savior's birth—He was born of a virgin to redeem us, to reveal God to us, to restore us back to where we ought to be. Now, let's look finally, and with a little tighter focus, on the second birth.

Remember what He says in verse 7, that we must be born again. Look at that: "Marvel not that I saith unto thee, Ye must be born again." Sometimes we hear people talk about a born-again Christian. You say, well I'm a born-again Christian. Well I know why you say that, because we feel we have to qualify it, because there are many who call themselves Christians who say they are not born again. I remember one well-known politician who was Vice President of the United States, and he said, Well, I'm a Christian, but I certainly haven't been born again. Well, that's a contradiction. And I'll tell you this much: if a man has not been born again, one day he will curse the day that he was born at all; because if you're not born twice, you die twice. But if you're born twice, you die but once. You say, What do you mean, die twice? Well, your first death is the physical death; the second death is eternal death. But we today have to qualify; we say, What kind of a Christian are you? A born-again Christian, like there are different categories, and you can choose what kind you want to be. But to say born-again is

redundant. It's like saying tooth-dentist or female woman. It doesn't make sense. If you are a Christian, you have been born again. If you have been born again, you are a Christian, and if you're not born again, you're not a Christian. It's just that plain; it's just that clear. You have to be born again. Jesus said, "Marvel not that I saith unto thee, Ye must be born again." He didn't say, I venture to suggest that under certain extenuating circumstances it might be a nice idea. He said, "You must be born again." Now, listen to me carefully: if Nicodemus needed to be born again, everybody in this building who is not yet born again needs to be born again. I told you that this name, the very name of Nicodemus, means superior; he was a Jew, a member of the chosen race, he was a Pharisee, a ruler in the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus was one of only seventy-one of all of the nation. The cream had risen to the top. He was a religious man. He tried to keep the commandments, and yet, Jesus said to this man that he needed to be born again.

Now, let's just talk about the new birth for a moment, and then I'll be finished. Let me tell you what happens when a person gets born again. Let me tell you what happened to me as a teenage boy when I got born again. Let me tell you some things that come with this third miracle birth. Remember, there's the sinner's birth—we're born into sin; there's the Savior's birth—He was born without sin; and then, there is the second birth where we, therefore, need to be born again.

A. There Is a Conception

What happens when you are born again? The very first thing that happens, in order for you to be born again, there must be a conception; there can be no birth without conception. Nicodemus wanted to know how this could happen, so look in verses 4 and 5: "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?" So that's the question we're addressing. How can you be born when you are old? That is, how can you have the second birth? Look in verse 5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily,"—He's going to tell him now how to be born again—"except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Now, it takes two parents for you to be born. The two parents in the new birth are water and the Spirit. The two parents that bring us into this new birth, that cause this conception, are water and the Spirit. Now, some people think that to be born of water is to be baptized. Now, He's not talking about baptism right now. Jesus is saying, Aren't you a master in Israel and you don't know these things? Baptism was not an Old Testament practice, something that a master of Israel ought to know. Jesus is not talking about baptism here. Baptism is not a symbol of a birth; it's a symbol of a death. We are buried with Him by baptism unto death. And so, when Jesus says being born of water, what's He talking about? He's talking about the Word of God. Over and over again in the Old Testament, a metaphor for the Word of God is water: "Is not my word like the rain that cometh down from heaven?" God's Word teaches that when we get

saved there is the washing of regeneration, in the book of Titus. The Bible speaks of the washing of water by the Word. In Ephesians chapter 5, it is the Word of God that is the seed that impregnates and gives the new birth. Peter makes it very, very clear, if you want to put this verse in your margin—1 Peter 1, verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." So, it takes the Word of God. It takes the Word of God. Our first parent is the Word of God—the Word of God.

And the Spirit of God, that's the reason I said that I can preach truth, that's the Word of God; but only the Spirit of God can impart truth, and these two come together. And when the Word of God and the Spirit of God come together in the womb of faith—in the womb of faith—then there's a conception. Faith is the womb, that's the reason He says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." And so, when you take the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, and put those two in the womb of faith, there is a conception that takes place, and there is a new birth.

B. There Is a Creation

Now, here's the second thing. Not only is there a conception; but along with that conception comes a creation, something new is brought into being. The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." Christians are not just nice people. Christians are not just people who have done a good job of scrubbing the dirty floor. Christians are new people. Don't get the idea that a Christian is somebody who has progressed through life and is doing better, like a tadpole who finally becomes a frog. No, a Christian is more like a frog who's become a prince, I mean, by the kiss of grace. It is something radical, dramatic; we are absolutely new when we are born again. There comes a new creation. You see, when a baby is conceived, there's the transference of life—the transference of life. John—the Gospel of John that we're in—the theme of the Gospel of John is life; it's mentioned thirty-six times. Jesus said, in John 10, verse 10: "I've come that you might have life"—not existence, but life. People who are already existing, I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly—John 10, verse 10.

C. There Is a Character

So, what happens when this miracle birth takes place? Well, there's a conception, and with that conception there comes a creation. We become absolutely new, and with that creation there comes character—first, a conception; then, a creation; and then, character, because the child has the character of the parents. Why do we do the things that we do? Because we are children of Adam. I've told you many times, don't get the idea that you're made in the image of God. You're not in the image of God. Adam was in the image of God; that image was marred in Adam, and then, the Bible says that Adam brought forth a son after his likeness, and in his image. We share now the character, the

nature, of Adam, before we're saved. We are by nature children of wrath. We have inherited that sinful nature from our first parents; when we get saved, born again, we get a new nature from our new parents. You see, that's the reason the Bible says there in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 4, "We become partakers of the divine nature." And without the new birth, you cannot be a partaker of the divine nature. When a birth takes place, a character is produced. You, as a child of God, if you are born into God's family, are going to have the character and the nature of God. Now, let me tell you something—I want to say this as plainly as I can say it; I want to say it kindly as I can say it, but I want to say it as forcefully as I can say it: if your religion has not changed your life, you'd better change your religion; you have not been saved. When you get saved, you don't just join a church and get baptized; a character is produced. You have the divine nature, because you have been born into the family of God.

And what are the marks of that divine nature? What are the traits of the twice born? May I mention four of them very quickly so you can see if you have that character, the characteristic of a person who has been born from above?

1. There Will Be a Deep Love for Jesus and His Word

First of all—this will be true of any person who has truly been saved: There will be a deep love for Jesus and His Word. There will be a deep love for Jesus and His Word. Do you love Jesus? Do you love the Word of God? If not, you have good reason to doubt that you've ever been born again, because if the nature of your Heavenly Father is in you through the Spirit and His Word, you're going to love what He loves, and He loves His own dear Son. And you're going to love the Son of God. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, got born again, and you can find over there in John chapter 7, verse 47, when there was a argument about who Jesus was, Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, steps forth to stand up for Jesus. And any person who's truly been saved, any person who's truly been born again, he is going to love the Lord Jesus Christ. And you can sit in this church, and love this church, and love this music, and love this tree, and love this orchestra, and love your friends, and die and go straight to hell. I want to know, Do you love Jesus? Is Jesus real to you?

2. There Will Be the Inner Witness of the Spirit

Number two, there will be the inner witness of the Spirit. Why? Because you are born of the Spirit. The Spirit of God comes into you, and the Bible says, in Romans chapter 8, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"—Romans 8:16—"the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." What is that witness of the Spirit? What is it—is it an emotional experience? No, it's not an emotional experience. It's not getting liver shivers and goose bumps, and getting wet around the eyes and warm around the heart. That's not what the witness of the Spirit is. You may

have all of those things; they are well and good, I'm not against emotion—emotion is fine—but the witness of the Spirit goes far beyond emotion. Emotions are fickle, and if you depend upon your feeling for the assurance of your salvation, the assurance of your salvation will vary with the condition of your liver. I'm going to tell you something, folks: the witness of the Spirit goes deeper than emotion. Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God, and God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part. The witness of the Spirit is that awareness that you belong to Him. You cannot explain it, but you know it, and you know that you know it, because God's Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God. And I wonder, do you have that sweet assurance? Do you have that love for Jesus? Do you have that witness for the Spirit?

3. There Will Be the Nature of the Father

I'll tell you a third thing that is going to be true about you, if you've been born again. You're going to have the nature of your Father—and what is the nature of your Father? He is holy, holy, holy; holy is the Lord God of Hosts. And that Holy Spirit that comes into you, when you are born of the Spirit, what kind of a Spirit is He? He is a Holy Spirit. What does that mean? It means that not only are you going to have a love for Jesus; you're going to have a hatred for sin—you're going to have a hatred for sin. Has that love of sin, that desire to sin—is that still there? You need to be saved. You say, Now, wait a minute. Are you telling me that if I ever sin, or if I am ever tempted, that I've never been saved? No, I'm not saying that. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, and it's not a sin to be tempted. As a matter of fact, the faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. It's not a sin to be tempted, and, if you do sin, it doesn't mean that you've never been saved, because the Bible says, in 1 John, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But I'm going to tell you this much, folks: if you have been born again, you have gotten a new nature, and that new nature is antithetical to sin. Let me tell you how it was in my own life. Before I got saved, I was running to sin; now I'm running from it. That's the difference. Listen. When God saves you, He doesn't fix you up where you can't sin any more, but, mister, He fixes you up where you can't sin and enjoy it any more. And, if that love of sin has not died out in your life, if you do not have a desire to be like Him and to be holy, you need to ask yourself this question: have I been born again? Or, am I just a church member? Am I just religious? Because, you see, in a birth, there's a conception, and when the conception comes, there is a character that is produced, and that character is the nature of our Lord.

4. There Will Be a Desire to Tells Others About Jesus

And now, I'll tell you another mark of a person who's truly been saved, born again, and it's true of every Christian: There will be a desire to tell others about Jesus. Life wants to

begat more life. It wants to reproduce, and you, if you have been born again, if you have been saved, you're going to want to share the Lord Jesus Christ with other people. Look in John chapter 3 and verse 21: "But he that doeth light cometh to the light that his deeds may be manifest that they're wrought in God." A man who is saved, he comes to the light, and then he wants to share the light. I remember reading a story a long time ago about a little girl in George Truett's church before Dr. Criswell became to be the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. That little girl came down the aisle like children do sometimes in our service, to give her heart to Christ, and she was a very young girl. And so, they thought, Well, before we let her be baptized, we'd better talk to her to make certain that she really understands what it is to be saved. So they brought this precious little girl and, took her back there, and some adults circled this little girl and began to ask her some questions. Well, you know, that's intimidating to a little child; we have to be so careful how we deal with little children. Sometimes we get a little child and ask the little child a lot of adult questions, and if the little child can't answer the adult questions, we say, well, they're not ready. You know, we get it backward. Jesus said the adult has to become like a little child. Sometimes these little children have more faith than we adults have. And that little child came, but they wanted to be sure; and that's fine—we want to be sure, and we're very careful with these precious little children. So they said to this little girl, Sweetheart, we're glad that you've come forward, but we want to wait a little while before we baptize you, because we just want to be certain that you know what you're doing. She puddled up, began to cry. They said, Now, sweetheart, that's all right. We love you. Don't cry just because you can't be baptized. Oh, she said, I'm not crying because I can't be baptized. She said, I'm crying about my brother, he doesn't know Jesus. I want him to be saved, too. One of those old guys said, I move we baptize her right away. Oh, friend, that's what it is. It's a love for Jesus and His Word. It's a desire to be holy, bears the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. There's a desire for others to know Jesus. That's a new birth. Has that happened to you? Do you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?

D. There Is a Completion

Then I want to say another word quickly about a birth. Not only is there this character, but a birth is a completion. I mean, once you're born, that's it. It's a completion; it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Jesus told His disciples when they went out, they said, Look, the demons are subject to us in your name. He said, Don't rejoice because the demons are subject; rejoice because your names are written in heaven—Luke chapter 10, verse 20—and that word written means it is written and it stands written. You see, that's what messed Nicodemus up to begin with. He said, I can't have a second birth, and Jesus is saying, That's right, Nicodemus. You cannot be born physically twice. And friend, you can't be born spiritually twice. There's only one birth in every realm. I defy

you to show me anywhere in the Bible where anybody was ever saved twice. You can't find it anymore than you could ever find in the physical realm where anybody ever had two physical births; you can never find where anybody has had two spiritual births. A birth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is a completion. And when you are born, you are born into the family of God.

Now, there, you may get out of fellowship in the natural realm, and you may get out of fellowship in the spiritual realm, but you, I never, when I got out of fellowship with my Father, I never ceased to be His child. You get out of fellowship with your Heavenly Father, He will chastise you, but He will never disown you. Again, what does a birth mean? Not only is a completion, but it is also a commencement at the same time. What do I mean by that? Once you're born, you're born, but you're not born full grown. You have to learn how to walk; you have to learn how to talk. All of your sin is in the past, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. You'll never see a policeman getting ready to arrest a newborn child for crimes he's committed, because a newborn child has no yesterdays—he's all tomorrows. And so it is in the new birth. We receive a brand new future; our past is in the grave of God's forgetfulness. The Bible says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." But then, we begin to grow.

We have a little grandbaby in our home right now. That little baby yesterday—oh, you ought to have seen him—he took his first step. What a beautiful child, a masterpiece, that little guy is now, and I watched him yesterday, and he took his first step in the hallway toward me. It's just beautiful to watch a little child discover the facilities that God built in him. But, you see, you don't take the child back to the hospital and say, Now, put on the legs, now put on the arms, now put in the eyes. When you're born, you get it all, and then you just develop it, you watch it develop. You learn how to walk, you learn how to talk, you learn all of these wonderful things; and when you get saved, you come down this aisle this morning and give your heart to Jesus, you're not going to sprout wings and get a halo; you're going to be a little baby Christian, and then you're going to have to discover all of these things. Sometimes people ask me, Oh, Pastor Rogers, you're so excited about Jesus; you must have the second blessing. Do you have the second blessing? I say, Yes, I do. They say, Well, tell me about it. I say the second blessing is discovering what I got in the first one, and the third blessing is discovering I didn't discover it all in the second blessing. Friend, let me tell you something: when you get Jesus, you get everything. In Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead. You say, Well, you get Jesus and then you get the Holy Spirit. Listen, friend: the Holy Spirit is Jesus in you. He says, I will come to you; I will not leave you comfortless; I am in you. I'm not denigrating the message of the Holy Spirit, but again, the Bible says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." How does

Jesus come into you? Not physically, he comes in through His Spirit. But once the Holy Spirit of God comes into you, and in Him you are complete, then you begin to discover that completion. A little baby discovers his hands, he learns how to walk, he learns how to talk, he learns these words—and so will you. Listen. Don't say I've got to grow up and then get born. That's foolish. Come just as you are, and give your heart to the Lord Jesus, and then a commencement will begin. I'm a better Christian than I was forty years ago, and I hope, if God tarries, I'll be a better Christian in the years to come than I am today. I am growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, and so will you. A little baby has to learn how to walk, and talk, and all of this, and so, in a birth, there is a commencement. You're all tomorrows. Your past is in the grave of God's forgetfulness, and every sin, every foul thing, every lie, every dirty thing ever done, every misspoken word, all of that is gone. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." And then, He gives us a brand new start. The Bible calls that a new birth.

Conclusion

Nicodemus was born into the natural world, bound to the sinful world, blind to the sinful world. Jesus was born of a virgin that Nicodemus might be born again. That's what Christmas is all about.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Pastor, would Jesus save me today? Yes, He will. Can I be born again today? Yes, you may; right now, you can pray and ask Christ to come into your heart. You say, Pastor, how can I do it? Well, there's the Word of God—I've just preached it; there's the Spirit of God—He's here. Your heart will become the womb where conception takes place. It must be the womb of willingness, and it must be the womb of faith, when you say, Lord, come into my heart, into my life right now. Now, let me tell you how Jesus told Nicodemus. Listen to me: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever"—friend, that's you—"that whosoever believes in him should not perish,"—that is, die and go to hell—"but should have everlasting life."

Would you pray this prayer? Lord Jesus, help me to trust you today. Help me to trust you enough never to be ashamed of you, Lord, to live for you all of my life. Lord, I need to be born again; I need to be saved. Come into my heart, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. In your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here; every eye up here. Look right at me. I'm going to ask that during this invitation that nobody leave this building unless it is a dire emergency. In just a moment, the ministers of our church are going to be standing at the head of each of these aisles, and up through there in that aisle way in the balcony there will be a minister along in various intervals in that aisleway. We're going to stand and sing an

invitational hymn. The people of this church are going to be praying for you, and if today you want to give your heart to Jesus, I'm going to ask you to do something wonderful. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Your coming forward can be your way of saying, I'm not ashamed of Jesus; I am trusting Him as my personal Savior and Lord. The faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. Jesus said, If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. Jesus said, If you confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father in heaven.

Well you say, Pastor, if I come down there to the front, what should I say? Just tell the minister that you're trusting Jesus. Just say, I'm trusting Jesus. What we want to do is to rejoice with you, answer any questions, seal your decision in prayer. It'll take just a short while, but, very carefully and very courteously, we want to do that, and you can go away today saying, Yes, I trusted Jesus, and I'm on my way to heaven. I have been born again.

Others of you today may need a church home. You're already saved, but you want to be a member of a church that believes the old time Gospel, that still preaches the necessity of the new birth, and so I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward and tell the minister that you want to place your membership here. Your coming forward to place your membership here can lead the way for some of these who need to come and make a public confession of their faith in Christ. A minister will be standing here to receive you. Don't look around to see what someone else is going to do; you be the first one out.

And let me say this: these people here today, most all of them have done exactly what I'm asking you to do, and they will rejoice; they're praying for you, they love you, and the Lord Jesus today is standing with arms wide open to receive you. And I promise you that the same Jesus that saved me when I was a teenage boy will save you today, and He'll keep you saved. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

The New Birth

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 12, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 3:1

Outline

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- II. The Connection That Transmits the New Birth
- III. The Character That Demonstrates the New Birth
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Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to a familiar passage this morning, would you, please, to John chapter 3. And I'll tell you why I've chosen that passage in just a moment. We're talking today about not only the birth of our Savior, but the birth of every sinner when he/she is born again.

Look, if you will, in John chapter 3, verse 1: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily—and when Jesus says verily, verily, that means truly, truly, pay attention— Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now, from time immemorial, people have raced their theological motors trying to figure out why Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night. Some think that he wanted special time with the Lord Jesus, so he came when Jesus would not be rushed. Others think that he came to Jesus by night because he was afraid. Others think that he was just so restless he couldn't wait until the morning, and he couldn't sleep. He tried counting sheep, and that didn't work, so he said, "I'll just go talk to the shepherd." And he got up, and he went to talk to the Lord Jesus about spiritual matters, because his heart was restless. And he had seen Jesus do all of these wonderful miracles, and he knew that there was something wonderful, something glorious about Jesus. He said, "No man can do these things, except God be with him. We know that

you're a teacher come from God," and He was a teacher come from God. What Nicodemus did not know at that moment, I don't believe, is that He was God come to teach. He was God who had stepped out of heaven, and He had come here to teach. And Nicodemus says, "How can you do all of these things? Explain these miracles. No man can do these miracles that you're doing, except God be with him." And it's as if Jesus said, "Nicodemus, if you want to understand miracles, you're going to have to become a miracle. You must be born again." Nicodemus' mind begins to churn. He says, "Well, how can I be born again? There are no reverse gears. How can I go back into my mother's womb and be born again?" And Jesus teaches him about a miracle birth, the new birth.

You know, at Christmas, we're thinking about a miracle birth, the virgin birth. Jesus was born of a virgin. Do you have difficulty believing that? If you do have difficulty believing it, it's because you're a naturalist, not a super-naturalist. May I put it more bluntly? You don't believe in God. Listen. If you believe in God, you will not have any difficulty with any miracle that the Bible reports—none! If you can get past Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," if you can accept that, what difficulty would you have with any miracle, that the God who made Adam and Eve out of nothing—nothing—could have His Son born of a virgin? Don't stumble over miracles. God is God. I hope you believe that. God is God!

And so, the birth—the birth—of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He stepped out of heaven into this earth through the portals of a virgin's womb, that was a miracle. But that was a miracle that laid the groundwork for another miracle; not only the Savior's supernatural birth, but the sinner's saving birth. You must be born again. And the second miracle, the new birth, is inextricably interwoven with the first miracle, the virgin birth. You see, Jesus was born of a virgin that we might be born again. Jesus left heaven and came to earth that we might leave earth and go to heaven. Jesus became the Son of man that we might become the sons and daughters of God.

And so here, Nicodemus sees that Jesus is supernatural. He says, "We know that you're a teacher come from God." And, indeed, He was. He stepped out of heaven and was born of a virgin. But now, Jesus is saying, "Nicodemus, you must be born again." Now, that's very interesting. Why did the Lord use the figure, the analogy, of a birth when He talked about how we come into His kingdom so we can see His kingdom? Well, all of us—all of us—have been born. That's something we can understand. If He talked about being saved, like a sheep returning to the fold—and the Bible does that—but not everyone has seen a sheep. Now, everybody knows what a sheep fold is. If you talked about being saved, like being cleansed from leprosy, well, some can understand that, but some have never seen leprosy. But did anybody get here without being born?

Been there, done that. All right. Been there, done that. We understand birth. That is common in the natural realm. And, Jesus, the great teacher, is showing us the analogy between the human birth—the first birth—and the new birth.

You see, the first time Nicodemus was born, he was born into the natural world. He was bound to this sinful world, because that which is born of flesh is flesh, and the works of the flesh are awful. And he was blind to the spiritual world. He couldn't see. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I have a dear friend who's sitting in this congregation this morning. He's blind. He cannot see what you see. Now, I don't scold him for being blind, nor should you scold a sinner for not being able to see. He can't see. There's no way that he can see, except he be born again. This man, born into the natural world, bound to the sinful world, blind to the spiritual world, needed another birth. So Jesus says to him, "Nick, you've got to be born again." Don't marvel at this. "Verily, verily; truly, truly; emphatically, emphatically, I say to you, you must be born again."

I want to give you some reasons—now, we don't have the center screen, but you can glance to the side screens if you want—that salvation is so much like a birth.

I. The Conception That Originates the New Birth

For example, I want you to see the conception that originates the new birth. In order for there to be a birth, there has to be a conception. And in order for there to be a conception, there must be two parents. Now, A. D. and Rose Rogers were the two parents of my first birth. Who are my parents in the second birth? My parents in the second birth are the Spirit of God and the Word of God—the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Notice, if you will, in the Scripture here where He says, in verse 5: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee; except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We're born of water and born of the Spirit. Now, don't make the horrible mistake of saying being born of water is being baptized. That's ridiculous. He's not talking here about baptism at all. Now, I believe in baptism, but baptism is not a part of your new birth. When Jesus says, "being born of water," He is using the analogy of the Word of God. You see, Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, and He says, "Aren't you a ruler in Israel? Don't you understand these things?" That is, Nicodemus was an Old Testament scholar. Baptism was not an Old Testament doctrine that Nicodemus should have understood. But Nicodemus did understand that in the Old Testament water is a symbol of the Word of God. For God says in the Book of Isaiah, "Is not my word like the rain that cometh down from heaven?" And when the prophet Ezekiel was talking about the new birth that would come to the Jewish nation, here's what he said, in Ezekiel chapter 36—and put it down in your margin—verses 25 and 26: "Then will I sprinkle

clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols; I will cleanse you—and listen to how he speaks now of the new birth: A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you.” Notice how he’s linking here water with the new birth, and how in the Old Testament water is symbol of the Word of God.

It’s the same in the New Testament. Put down Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 26. The Bible tells how Jesus Christ died for the church, and in verse 26 it says, “that he might sanctify it and cleanse it—listen, listen—with the washing of water by the Word”—the washing of water by the Word. You see, the Word of God is that element that comes together with the Spirit of God to cause a conception. Now, there’s a verse that sums it all up clearly: 1 Peter 1, verse 23, which says—and we’re talking about the new birth; are you listening?—“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God.” That’s makes it clear. That makes it clear that, beyond the shadow of any doubt, it is the Word of God that is the seed that impregnates. “Being born again not of corruptible seed—sperm—but of incorruptible, by the Word of God.”

And so, when Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, you must be born of water,” if he were an Old Testament scholar, he’s understanding here the symbolism. That’s the Word. “Ye must be born of water and of the Spirit.” Those are the two parents: the Word of God and the Spirit of God that come together. And when they do, a conception takes place.

Where does it take place? In the womb of faith—in the womb of faith. When the Word of God and the Spirit of God find a womb of faith, as he’s going to say in a moment, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.” And so, there is the conception that originates the new birth.

II. The Connection That Transmits the New Birth

Secondly, there is the connection that transmits the new birth. Now, when my Mom and my Dad conceived me, they did not create life; they transmitted life. They translated life. Their life is in me. They had no power to create any life. All they did, when that sperm and that egg came together in my mother’s womb, they transferred the life that was already in them. Now, a birth involves life, and it is transference of life. When you’re born again, the life of God is transferred into you.

Did you know that when the Bible says that you must be born again, the Greek scholars tell us the word literally means born from above—born from above? So many people get the idea that being saved is getting man out of earth and into heaven. No. It is getting God out of heaven into man. That’s what it is. It’s where the life of God comes

into you, just like the life of my parents came into me. And, because God is eternal, when that life comes into me, what do I have? Eternal life. I could not more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist, because the very life of God is in me.

Now, even if you're unsaved, you will exist forever somewhere. When God made you, He gave you eternal existence. Your soul could not more cease to exist than God could cease to exist. But without Jesus, you have existence; with Jesus, you have life. There's a difference. He said to people whose hearts were already beating, in John 10, verse 10: "I've come that you might have life." These are people who already had existence. "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." Oh, thank God for abundant life.

You know, there are a lot of people who want to go to heaven because they want to live forever. You'd get sick and tired of heaven, if you weren't saved. People who want to live forever don't even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. Friend, it is the abundant life that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Character That Demonstrates the New Birth

There is the conception that initiates this life. There is the connection that transfers this life. Thirdly—thirdly—there is the character that demonstrates this life. In verse 6, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, that which is born of the flesh is flesh." And if you want to know what the character of the flesh is, I suggest you read Galatians 5. That's the character—I hate to say it—but I got it from my Mom and Dad. And I got the old nature from Mom and Dad. They got it from their parents, who got it from their parents, who got it from Adam.

I've told you before about a lady who came to me one time. She said, "You're a Rogers, aren't you? I said, "Yes, I am." "Oh," she said, "I'm so happy to meet you. I've traced our family lineage back. You'll be so happy to know we came over on the Mayflower." I said, "Oh?" I said, "I traced it back further than that." She said, "You did?" I said, "Yes." I said, "You will be amazed to know that we came from the crooked farmer and a drunken sailor. The farmer was Adam, and the sailor was Noah. That's how far back we go—all the way back!"

"In Adam all die." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." You see, a new birth is demonstrated by a new character. When you're saved, you get a new nature. The Bible says, in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 4: "Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers—now listen very carefully—by these—these great and precious promises—you might be partakers of the divine nature."

Did you know that, humanly speaking, I have the nature of A. D. and Rose Rogers in

me? Did you know that if you're born again, you're going to have the nature of God in you? You're going to have the nature, you have become a partaker of the divine nature. There is the character that demonstrates the new birth. Now, if you have not, if you don't have that divine nature, what right do you have to say that God is your Father, that you have been born of the Word of God and the Spirit of God, if you've not been born again?

Now, has there been a change? I can tell you, when I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, there was a change that took place in me—four definite things that took place. It changed my nature, the same things that took place in the life of Nicodemus when he got born again.

Number one: There will be a deep love for Jesus Christ and His Word. God loves His Son, Jesus, and if His nature is in me, I'm going to love His Son, Jesus—there are no ifs, ands, and buts about it. God loves His Word. I am going to love His Word. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, perhaps because he was afraid to be seen in the daytime, but, if you'll turn to John chapter 7, they were having a great confab about who Jesus was. And the chief priests and the rulers were castigating, criticizing, condemning Jesus Christ, and Nicodemus spoke up for Jesus. John chapter 7, verse 50: "Nicodemus saith unto them—and it says parenthetically, he that came to Jesus by night—being one of them, Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and knoweth what he does?" Nicodemus said, "Wait a minute! Hold it! How can you talk about Him this way? How can you judge Him without having examined Him? Nicodemus is in love with Jesus Christ, and he's not ashamed of Jesus Christ. And I'm not ashamed of Jesus. And if you're ashamed of Jesus, you need to ask yourself this question: Do you have the divine nature? If you have the divine nature, you cannot be ashamed of Him. That's the reason the Bible says, "He that believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." That's the reason I give a public invitation for people, at the close of the service, to openly, publicly, gladly walk out, and say, "Yes, I belong to Jesus Christ." That's why we're baptized: to show we're not ashamed of Jesus.

A little boy was in the children's church, not in the big church. He gave his heart to Christ. The leader of the children's church said, "Go over and tell the pastor in the big church that you've been saved and you need to get baptized." He didn't understand the word baptize, so he went over to the pastor and said what he thought he heard. He said, "I've been saved; I need to get advertised." So do you. I mean, if you're saved, there's going to be a love for Jesus. You're not going to be ashamed of Jesus. There was in my heart.

Number two: There's going to be the inner witness of the Spirit, if you're born again. In John chapter 8, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about the Spirit: "The wind blows where

it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” There’s something mysterious about the new birth, just like the wind that blows. We hear it, we feel it; we don’t see it, we don’t know where it comes from, we don’t know where it’s going; but we cannot deny it. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit. The Bible teaches that when we’re born again, God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. “Adrian, what is the witness of the Spirit?” I can’t describe it. I can’t tell you how I know I know, but I know I know. If you’ve born again, you say, “It’s like the wind. It’s mysterious.” I don’t understand the wind, but I know when it’s blowing. It’s not an emotional feeling. Nothing wrong with emotion, but your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. And I’ve told you before, He doesn’t do the deepest work in the shallowest part. It’s beyond emotion. It is an awareness of God’s Spirit speaking to our spirit that we are a child of God.

Not only is there a love for Jesus Christ that comes by that divine nature, and not only is there the witness of the Spirit, but I’ll tell you something else: There will be in you a desire for holiness, to be pure and clean. Why? Because you’ve become a partaker of the divine nature. And what is the nature of God? God is holy! God is holy! Do you have a desire for holiness? “No, pastor, I really don’t. Well then, you need to get born again. That’s just that plain. If you don’t have a desire for holiness, you need to get born again. You’re in this same third chapter—go right on down to verse 19. And Jesus is still speaking, and He says, “And this is the condemnation—this is why people are lost—that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Now, you’re going to find an unsaved man is not going to love the light; he’s going to love the dark, because his deeds are evil. That’s his nature. That’s the works of the flesh. And, “he neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest—now, notice this—that they are wrought in God—in God.” What is the nature of God? Righteousness. What is the nature of the flesh? Darkness and sin.

When you come to Jesus Christ, there is going to be a desire to live a holy life. That doesn’t mean you’re going to be perfect. Look up here right now. You’re looking at a very imperfect man. But if you could see my heart—and I’m not ashamed to say this—you would see a heart that wants to serve God—you would; a desire to be what God wants me to be. And that’s one of the birthmarks of the believer. That’s one of the traits of the twiceA born.

What are we talking about? A love for Jesus, the witness of the Spirit, a desire to be holy, and, last of all, a desire to share Jesus Christ with others. We’re just talking about

the traits of the twice-born. From the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ to this very moment, there has been a burning desire that I could tell others about Jesus Christ.

Could I have the cure to AIDS, or cancer, or whatever, and not tell it? Could I know what I know, and believe what I believe—that there's a heaven to be gained, a hell to be shunned, a Savior who died, a joy to enjoy—and not share it? Of course not! And so, there's a character that demonstrates the new birth. We're born of the Spirit.

IV. The Completion That Settles the New Birth

Now, let's move on very quickly, and here's the fourth thing: the completion that settles the new birth. How many times does a person get born physically? One time. How many times does a person get born spiritually? One time. Why did Jesus say that being saved is like being born again? Because a birth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, in any realm. Anybody here been born twice physically? If you have, stand up. I have some questions I want to ask you. No! Nobody's ever born twice, physically. Has anybody ever been born twice spiritually? No! What I mean, you had one new birth, not two new births. You can only be saved one time—only saved one time.

Now, if there are some people who believe that you can get saved, and then lost, and get saved again, do you want have a little contest? Show me any place in the Bible—anywhere—where anybody was saved twice, and I'll pay you for a vacation in Hawaii, okay? Just show me. Show me any time in the Bible where anybody was ever saved twice. No! When you are saved, when you're born again, there is the completion that settles the new birth. Now, I'm so grateful for that.

If a baby gets born here in Shelby County, there's a record that is written down of that birth. And when you're born into God's heavenly home, you have a birth record in heaven. Jesus tells about this—Luke 10, verse 20: "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice: not that spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven." And, in the Greek, the form of that verb simply means that they stand written; they will exist forever.

When I was born physically, the Adrian that was born physically in Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida will never, ever cease to exist. There was a time when I was not; there never will be a time when I will not be. When you were born physically, you were born with an everlasting existence. There never will be a time when you will cease to exist. No one who is once born can ever be unborn. You say, "But if I die, I'll cease to exist." No, you won't. You'll just keep on existing. There is no way that what happened when I was conceived in my mother's womb can ever be undone. Death can't take it away. I will go on endless, dateless, timeless, measureless, never ceasing

to exist. Physically, my body may decay, but the real me will go on and on and on.

Now, spiritually, also, friend, there is a completion that settles the new birth. When you are born spiritually, you can never, ever be unborn. Well, you say, “What if you get born again and then you disobey God?” Well, when I got born naturally, I disobeyed my parents. That didn’t mean I wasn’t my father’s child; it meant very much I was, in ways I didn’t want to recognize, because my dad had a way of, you know, they’d put him in jail today, I’m sure. My dad was an artist. He could grab my wrist and take off his belt all at the same time, and around and around we’d go. It was a long time before I learned enough physics to learn not to be way out there, because that’s centrifugal force. Get in close around the knees like this. Get in close.

Now, that didn’t mean I wasn’t his son. It meant I was his son. The Bible says, “Whom the Father loves, He chastens.” And if you disobey your heavenly Father when you’re born into His family, God loves you. He doesn’t let you go. He chastens you. What I’m trying to say is this, friend: There is a completion that settles the new birth. When you are born, you are born, and you cannot be unborn. God may chastise you, but a birth is a settled event. Nothing can undo it—nothing! The physical birth or the spiritual birth.

V. The Commencement That Begins the New Birth

Next, number five: I want you to notice the commencement that begins the new birth. You see, why did Jesus say being saved is like being born again? Well, a birth is a beginning. It’s a commencement. When a baby comes into the world, a baby comes into the world with no past. A baby is all tomorrows; he’s no yesterdays. You’ll never see a policeman waiting in the delivery room to arrest a newborn baby for crimes that he has done. No. And, friend, when you’re born into the family of God, you’re all tomorrows; you’re no yesterdays. There’s no crime, there’s no sin to be held against you whatever, because you have been born into the family of God. Your sins are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. You may be a thief, you may be a murderer, you may be some perverted person, you may be a prostitute, but when you come into the family of God, all of that is gone. It’s gone. The Bible says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us”—Psalm 103. Not as far as the north is from the south. You can measure the North Pole and the South Pole. There’s no East Pole and West Pole. That’s as far as infinity—“so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” He’s buried them in the grave of His forgetfulness. And if a prostitute from off the streets gave her heart to Jesus Christ in this service this morning, I want to tell you when she bows her head and says, “Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me,” she rises from her knees, in the sight of God, a pure

virgin. You may not believe that, but, friend, let me give you some Scripture here to back that up, in case you're so self-righteous.

Jesus said to the Pharisees that the publicans and the sinners would go into heaven before they would—1 Corinthians chapter 6. Listen to this now. Don't miss it—1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?—that is, you can't get into heaven with your sin—Be not deceived: neither fornicators—that's those who practice sex before marriage—nor idolaters—those are people who love, worship, fear anything more than God—nor adulterers—those are people who cheat on their marriage—nor effeminate—those are people who are sodomites—nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, not extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." Now, let's just stop right there. If that's your lifestyle, you need to be saved. You need to be saved—no ifs, ands, and buts about it. And don't come to me about this later. Don't say, "Oh, you shouldn't have said that." I didn't say it; I'm reading. That's Paul. Take it up with Paul, if you ever get a chance to see him, which you won't. I'm serious. Listen. Paul said, "Hey, don't be deceived. If you practice this lifestyle, you're not going to heaven." But now, here's the blessed part. Watch this—verse 11: "And such were some of you..."—not are; were—"...but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of our God," because you are born of the Word and of the Spirit. He doesn't say, "You're still those things." No! When a baby is born, he has no yesterdays. He is all tomorrows. So when you give your heart to Jesus, this is the first day of the rest of your spiritual life. You're brand spanking new baby in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. The Certainty That Assures the New Birth

Now, here's the sixth of these seven things. I want you to notice the certainty that assures the new birth, the certainty that assures it. You see, a birth is a definite experience. Can you be sure you're saved? Of course, you can be sure you're saved! What if I were to ask you "Are you saved?" If you're like the average person, you'd say, "Well, I hope so; I think so; I'm doing the best I can." Well, suppose I were to ask you have you ever been born—I'm talking about physically now. You say, "Well, I hope so; I think so." You wouldn't understand the question, would you? No. You see, a birth is a definite experience. And so, you can say, "Yes, I know that I'm saved." There's a certainty that assures the new birth.

Now, how do you know that you are born again? Well, we've talked to you about these things, but it is a definite experience. Now, that doesn't mean that you have to remember when you were saved. I don't remember when I was born. Anybody here

remember when you were born the first time? I don't think so. You've got a good memory if you do. No. I've heard people say, "Now, if you can't tell the name, the place, exactly when you were saved, you haven't been saved." There's just one thing wrong with that: it's not true. The Bible never says he that believed is saved; it says, "He that believes." You see, the test of your new birth is not whether you can remember some experience in the past; the test of your new birth is, is the person sitting in that chair this morning trusting Jesus? God always puts it in the present tense.

Will Rogers, I'm told, went to get a passport, and they said, "Well, we need your birth certificate." He said, "What for?" They said, "Proof of your birth." He said, "Well, I'm here, ain't I?"

Listen. I'm telling you, friend—listen to me. The experience is this: that you are now trusting Jesus. The Bible never puts it in the past tense. First John chapter 5, verse 13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God"—not believed, but believes. If the person sitting in your chair right now is, with all of his heart, trusting Jesus Christ as his or her Savior, it doesn't matter what happened in the past. You believe in Jesus, you have eternal life. If you are believing, it follows, as night follows day, you did believe.

I use this in our Back-to-the-Basics Class. If you and I decide to go, say, to Kentucky, and I catch an airplane to Louisville, and you drive, and I'm there in the Louisville Airport, and you meet me in the Louisville Airport, and we're both there in the Louisville Airport, and you say, "Pastor, do you remember when you crossed the state line?" I'd say, "No, I really don't." I say, "Do you remember when you crossed the state line?" "I sure do. A big sign there said, "Welcome to Kentucky." Now, just because I can't remember when I crossed the state line, does that mean I didn't cross the state line? No, not at all! You know the proof that I crossed the state line? I'm in the Louisville Airport, right? I'm in the Louisville Airport.

I mean, listen. If I am trusting Jesus, I did trust Jesus. And if you remember the day, the moment, when you gave your heart to Jesus, I'm happy for you. That is wonderful. That is glorious. But I'm telling you it was a definite experience, and if Christ is in your heart, and the Holy Spirit is witnessing to your spirit that you're a child of God, and you have those birthmarks of the believer based on the Word of God, you ought to be able to say, "Praise God, I know I'm saved; I know it—not because of some past remembrance, but because of present reality."

VII. The Compensation That Enriches the New Birth

Now, here's the last thing I want you to see: the compensation—the compensation—that enriches the new birth. You see, when Nicodemus was born, he was born into a

kingdom—he was born into a kingdom. I mean, when he was born again, he entered the kingdom of God. Now, I don't know who Nicodemus' physical father was, but I know this: that when Nicodemus got born again—are you listening?—he got a new Father, he got a new family, he got a new fortune, and he got a new future, because now he is an heir of God. God is his Father. He comes into the kingdom of God! And that's the compensation that enriches the new birth.

Conclusion

Now, how does this happen? Remember that the Spirit of God and the Word of God come together in the womb of faith. That's the reason Jesus goes on to say to Nicodemus, in verse 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life."

And if you will trust Him, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, you'll be with both Jesus and Nicodemus in the kingdom of God. That's the Word of God.

Would you bow your heads? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, it's time for you, precious friend, to open your heart to Jesus Christ. Remember, the new birth is not a luxury; it's a necessity, if you would see the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." You see, if you're not born twice, you're going to die twice. You're going to die physically, and then you're going to die eternally. But if you're born twice, you can only die once physically, but you will be with God forever in the glory. If you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this—pray it from your heart: Dear God, I'm so grateful that You love me. I know that I'm a sinner. I don't deserve salvation, but I need it. Thank You, Lord, that You gave Your only begotten Son, that, if I would believe, if I would trust, I would be born again. Lord, right now, I trust You. Right now, with all of my heart, I trust You. I give You my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then tell Him this: Lord, I believe You've done it. I don't look for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. And, Lord, just as Nicodemus was not ashamed of Jesus, give me the courage to stand up for Him today. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

The Facts of Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 19, 1980

Main Scripture Text: John 3:1–7

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

JOHN 3:3

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Introduction

I want you to find in your Bible, please, John, the third chapter. Of course, that's a great chapter. And if you're a Bible student, it's well marked and underlined and dog-eared because you love John, the third chapter. And it's the kind of a chapter that we have to keep coming back to time after time again. I want us to read the first seven verses of the third chapter of John: *“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”* (John 3:1–7)

I said I want to talk to you today about the facts of life. A father said to his son, “Son,

don't you think it's about time we had a talk about the facts of life?" He said, "Sure, Dad. What do you need to know?" Well, we have a generation today that's way out ahead of us, but that's not what I'm talking about when I'm talking about the facts of life today. I'm talking about real life, spiritual life, and eternal life.

One of the themes of the book of John is life, and as you read the Gospel of John, you'll find out that he mentions life at least thirty-six times. And do you want to know why the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth, suffered, bled, and died? He tells us clearly and without equivocation in John 10, verse 10: "[I've] come that [you] might have life." (John 10:10) And we're going to be talking about that life today in a message that we're going to call "The Facts of Life," where Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again. And may I say that if Nicodemus needed to be born again, how much more do the rest of us need to be born again. For Nicodemus, outwardly, was a good man. He was a religious man. He was a righteous man, so far as men go. He was a Jew, the Bible tells us. (John 3:1) That means he was of the chosen race. But not only was he a Jew; he was "*a ruler of the Jews.*" (John 3:1) He was the best of the best, and not only that—he was a member of the Sanhedrin, one of only seventy-one in all the nation Israel. Even the name *Nicodemus* means "superior." He was a superior man. But Jesus told this man Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, you must be born again." (John 3:7)

But now, here's an interesting question: Why did Jesus describe this matter of becoming a Christian and this matter of salvation and conversion? Why did He describe it as a birth? Because it's only one of many figures that describe what happens to us when we get saved. I'll tell you, one reason I believe that the Lord Jesus used the figure of a birth is because it is a very universal experience. I mean, when you got into this world, you were born into it. Amen? You can nod your head; it's okay. Did you get in any other way? If you did, I want to meet you after the service; I have some questions I want to ask you. All right, you got into this world by birth. And so, therefore, a birth is something that we're all familiar with. I mean, that's a universal thing.

Now, sometimes salvation is described in the Bible as a cure for leprosy, but many of us have never seen leprosy, much less been cured of leprosy—that is, physically. Or, sometimes salvation is described in the Bible as a sheep returning to the fold. Some people have never seen a sheep. I daresay that somewhere in this congregation there may be someone who has never seen a sheep. And we're not familiar, really, with the ways of sheep. Sometimes salvation is described as a resurrection from the dead—and indeed, it is—but none of us has ever seen anybody raised from the dead. But there's one thing that we all know something about, because we all experienced it, and it is this: that salvation is described and characterized as a birth. And, therefore, there are some very wonderful lessons for our lives that I want us to learn today. I want you to see the parallel between our physical birth and the new birth that the Lord Jesus Christ was

talking about, and I think we're going to learn some wonderful lessons today.

I. A Birth Involves a Conception

Point number one: A birth involves conception. When there's a birth, before that birth, two parents come together, and there is a conception. And that conception, of course, comes about as a birth, or, at least, it results in a birth.

Now, I said if you got into this world any way except being born into it by two parents, I want to talk to you. But actually, there are other ways to get into this world and to get a body. Adam came into this world without the action of a man or a woman. God just spoke and created Adam and, well, actually, formed him out of the dust of the ground by a creative act. That's the way Adam got his body. There was no man or a woman, no earthly father or mother, and that was pretty wonderful. But I've always felt a little sorry for Adam. Have you ever thought about the fact Adam never could say, "Now, when I was a boy..." Have you ever thought about that? Well, that's the way Adam got into the world. Now, Eve got into the world with the help of a man, but no woman. Eve was taken from Adam's side, and that's the way Eve got into the world. So, that's another way. But you didn't come here by coming out of your husband's side. No, that's not the way you got here. Well, then, of course, the Lord Jesus came into the world and received a body. There was a woman, but no man. The Lord Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus was supernaturally born. So, that's the third way that people have come into the world and gotten bodies. But the Lord Jesus was not our pattern and our example insofar as that particular birth was.

The way that you come into the world and the way that I come into the world is through a birth. There are two parents—a father and a mother, a man and a woman. Now, that's the physical birth. That's the way you get into the world physically. There's a conception as a man and a woman come together physically. But, in the spiritual realm, when you're born again, there are also two parents that must come together. What are these two parents that make us the children of God? Look, if you will, in John chapter 3, verse 5, as Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, this ruler of the Jews. And Jesus says to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, verse 5: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:5) Our two spiritual parents are described here: number one is water; number two is the Spirit.

A. We Are Born of Water

Now, I want to say that being born of water does not refer to baptism. I want to make that emphatically clear. Water, here, is not a symbol of baptism. In the first place, Jesus chided Nicodemus for not understanding what He was talking about. He said, "Are you a master of Israel, and you don't understand these things?" (John 3:10) That is, "You're

a teacher of the Old Testament, and you don't understand what I'm talking about?"

Now, nowhere in the Old Testament was water baptism taught. It's obvious Jesus wasn't talking about water baptism because He was saying that Nicodemus should have understood what He was talking about. To be born of water is not talking about baptism. Baptism is not a symbol of a birth. Don't you know that baptism is a symbol of a death? The Bible says in Romans 6: *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death."* (Romans 6:4) And if you try to make this a symbol of baptism, you're mixing your metaphors. You're like that guy who said in church—he prayed, "Dear Lord, if there happens to be a spark of fire in this church, please water that spark." Well, that's mixing your metaphors. We don't want to water our sparks. Now, if you try to make baptism coincidental with "born of water," then you're mixing your metaphors here. Baptism is not a symbol of a birth but of a death.

"Well," you say, "then what does water stand for here in this particular passage?" It stands for the Word of God. In the Old Testament, over and over again, water is used as a symbol of the Word of God. God says, "Is not my word like the rain that cometh down from heaven?" (Isaiah 55:10–11) And the Bible speaks in the New Testament of *"the washing of water by the word."* (Ephesians 5:26) So, one of your spiritual parents is the Word of God.

B. We Are Born of the Spirit

But, we're born not only of water, but of the Spirit—the Spirit of God. Now, that is the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of God and the Word of God come together in your heart with your consent, then there is a conception. And the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ gives us an illustration of this because that, too, was a miracle birth. You see, Nicodemus wanted to understand miracles. He said, *"No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* (John 3:2) And Jesus said, in effect, "Nicodemus, if you want to understand miracles, you're going to have to become a miracle. You're going to have to be born again." (John 3:3)

Well, you think of the miracle birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. What happened? The angel of the Lord came to Mary, and the angel of the Lord spoke to Mary and told her how the power of the Almighty was going to overshadow her and the thing that was going to be conceived in her would be conceived by the Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit. And then, do you know what Mary said? Listen to what this precious little young lady, this virgin girl, said. She said, *"Be it [done] unto me according to thy word."* (Luke 1:38) There you have it—the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, and Mary's yielding. In spite of the shame, in spite of the discomfort, in spite of the misunderstanding, no matter what anybody else says or thinks—*"Be it [done] unto me [O Lord] according to thy word."* (Luke 1:38) And Christ was formed in her, and a miracle took place in her.

And, dear friend, I want to tell you, a miracle can take place in you today as the Word of God and the Spirit of God meet your will, and you bow your head, and you say to God today, “O God, be it done unto me according to your Word. No matter what anybody thinks, no matter of the inconvenience, no matter of the suffering, no matter of the shame. be it done unto me according to thy Word.” A birth requires a conception. And, as the Word of God and the Spirit of God, with your will and your consent, come together, then, dear friend, there is a marvelous and a wonderful conception, and I thank God for that.

Let me give you the proof text when I say that water here symbolizes the Word of God: 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 23. The Bible says, “[We are] born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23) That is the sperm that impregnates you—the Word of God. “Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23) You see, a birth, dear friend, involves, first of all, a conception. There must be a conception before there can be a birth, as the Word of God and the Spirit of God and your will conjoin and then that miracle begins to take place.

II. A Birth Involves a Creation

But now, listen, because a birth involves a conception, it also involves a creation. Did you know that, when two parents come together in the physical realm and bear offspring, that they are sharing in the creative act of God? A new life is created. You see, there’s a miracle.

You remember when James Robertson was here. If you heard him, he talked about going into the hospital to wait for his little girl to be born. And he said, “You think it’s hard on those mothers? It’s hard on those fathers in the waiting room.” And he said, “Finally, that doctor, who was a Christian man, burst through the door and said excitedly, ‘It’s a miracle!’” James said, “What?” He said, “It’s a miracle.” He said, “What?” He said, “It’s a miracle.” Well, by that time James was hysterical. He said, “What do you mean ‘a miracle’? Three, four, five, seven—what?” “No,” he said, “birth: it’s a miracle.” The natural birth is a miracle. It is—it really is—because, you see, there is life that comes about. There is a creation of life, and, you see, that’s what happens, dear friend, when we get saved again. Have you ever read there in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17? Listen to it. Don’t turn to it; just listen to it—2 Corinthians 5, verse 17: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation].” (2 Corinthians 5:17) A birth involves a creation. We cooperate with God in bringing about new life. And, dear friend, when you are born again, there is a direct creative act of God. Someone new comes into existence. You’re born again.

Henry Drummond was a scientist, and Henry Drummond said something very

interesting. He said, “There are several kingdoms in the world that we know of. The lowest of these kingdoms is the mineral kingdom: minerals, the rocks, and the metals, and so forth, and the sand, and the silica. It has no feeling. It is inanimate. It is lifeless. The next highest kingdom is the vegetable kingdom, plant life. Now, plant life has life, of course, and it grows; but it doesn’t have sensible life. It can’t feel, and, so far as we know, it has no will or anything like that”—now, sometimes people sing to their flowers. I don’t know about that, but it is not sensible life—“Then, the next highest kingdom is the animal kingdom. The animal kingdom has life, and it has sensible life; that is, animals can feel, and will, and act. The next highest kingdom is the human kingdom, and we are above the animal kingdom because man is more than a clever animal that can talk. Man, being made in the image of God, has a spirit.” And so, there is that human kingdom. But above all of these kingdoms is the kingdom of God that Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about.

Now, here’s something interesting. How can something get out of the mineral kingdom and into the plant kingdom? No mineral can lift itself into the plant kingdom. And no plant can lift itself into the animal kingdom. And no animal can lift itself into the human kingdom. And no human can lift himself into the kingdom of God. But, wait a minute—the plant kingdom can reach down and bring up the mineral kingdom. That plant kingdom can send its roots down into the earth and absorb those minerals and change those minerals into a rose. But, wait a minute—the animal kingdom can reach down and absorb the vegetable kingdom. And the cow can feed upon that clover and alfalfa, and so forth, and turn it into cow. But, wait a minute—the human kingdom can turn the animal kingdom into the human kingdom, as we turn steak into human beings with the help of the butcher and the cooperation of the cow. (And sometimes the cow doesn’t want to cooperate.) And, we turn that kingdom, and we can reach down and lift that kingdom and assimilate it. And how, dear friend, are those in the human kingdom going to get into the divine kingdom? We cannot invade it. We cannot, of ourselves, lift it. But we are lifted by a miracle into the kingdom of God, you see. We cannot invade that kingdom. We must be lifted from this kingdom into that kingdom by a miracle called “the new birth,” which is a creative act of God.

Did you know, when the Bible says that “[you] must be born again,” (John 3:7) it literally says, “you must be born from above”? That’s literally what it says. Now, we’ve said “born again” so many times, but if you wanted to be absolutely precise, you would say, “You must be born from above.” That is, you cannot lift yourself. God must reach down and lift you. You’re born from above. And all of the evolutionists tell us, you know, that we’ve just sprung from the beast, and we’re going onward and upward, and all we need is just a boost. *Man doesn’t need a boost from beneath; he needs a birth from above.* That’s what he needs. You must be born from above. And so, listen, a birth,

number one, involves a conception; but, number two, a birth involves a creation. *“If any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creation].”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

III. A Birth Involves a Character

Thirdly, a birth involves a character. Your character is formed by your birth. A baby, for example, has the nature of its parents. It takes on the character—or, if you will, the characteristics—of the parents. And when you’re born again, when you’re born into the family of God, when you’re born supernaturally, then you take on the character of God, for birth involves character. The Bible says again, in Peter, that we are made *“partakers of the divine nature.”* (2 Peter 1:4) The Spirit of God and the Word of God come together, and that makes a divine change, which is in you, and the nature of God is literally formed in you.

Now, Nicodemus was a good man, but he had an old nature. And I don’t care how good you are—listen to me—I don’t care what lodge you’re a member of; I don’t care how many times you’ve been baptized; I don’t care where you are on the social register; I don’t care how many of the Ten Commandments you think you keep—you’re not a better person than Nicodemus was, and Nicodemus needed a change of nature. And *if you think you can go to heaven without being born again, you’re ignorant of two things: you don’t know how sinful you are, and you don’t know how holy God is.* God demands a change of nature. God demands that you be made supernaturally a *“[partaker] of the divine nature.”* (2 Peter 1:4) Now, Nicodemus was a good man, but Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“You [have to] be born again.”* (John 3:7)

In the next chapter, the fourth chapter of John, you find the story of the woman at the well. You remember her? Don’t turn to it, but read it when you get home. She had to be saved, too. She had to be born again. I’m so glad that God the Holy Spirit put those chapters side by side. There was this religious leader; he needed to be saved. And there was this prostitute; she needed to be saved. She’d been married five times and was living with a man, then, who wasn’t her husband. Now, that was supposed to be a mark of shame. Today they’d give her the Academy Award. But she was a woman who was a fallen woman; and yet, she was transformed. And God gave her a new nature. And so, what I’m trying to say is no matter how good you think you are, you need to be born again; no matter how bad you think you’ve done, you can be born again. Isn’t that wonderful? Because, you see, a birth involves not only a conception, and not only does it involve a creation, but it involves a character. You take on the character of your parents. And because Nicodemus was a child of Adam, he had on the characteristics of Adam. But when he got saved, he became a child of God and took that divine nature.

IV. A Birth Involves a Commencement

All right. Now, let me say, fourthly, that a birth also involves a commencement. You see, a birth is a beginning; it is a commencing of something. You start something brand new when you get born. A newborn child is all tomorrows; he is no yesterdays. He has a brand-new future. We've heard that saying, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Oh, how true that is when you get born again! And because a newborn child has all tomorrows and he has no yesterdays, there's nothing that's held against the newborn child. One thing you'll never see is a policeman in a delivery room getting ready to arrest a baby as soon as it's born and charge that baby with a crime. Now, one thing you won't do is charge that baby with a crime, because he has not committed any crime. The Bible speaks of those children as of yet "*having done [neither] good [nor] evil,*" (Romans 9:11) you see.

And so, this is what happens when you get saved, when you're born again: friend, your past is gone. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*" (Psalms 103:12) Isn't that wonderful? I'm glad He didn't say, "As far as the north is from the south"—but "*as far as the east is from the west.*" (Psalms 103:12) Why? You can measure the north from the south. We have a North Pole and a South Pole, but we don't have any "East Pole" and any "West Pole." Have you ever thought about that? There is no measuring the east from the west. "God hath removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west." (Psalms 103:12) He hath buried them in the grave of His forgetfulness. And "*if any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creature],*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) for a birth is a commencement. And it doesn't matter what you may have done—you may have been a prostitute—but I want to tell you, when a prostitute gets born again—and you pay attention to me—she becomes an arch virgin in the sight of God. I said an arch virgin. "*Though your sins be as scarlet, [she] shall be white as snow; [and] though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" (Isaiah 1:18) And there's no blot, no blur, no blemish, no stain, no sin that is not washed whiter than snow by the blood of Jesus Christ. A brand-new start—wouldn't you like that? Wouldn't you like that? You see, a birth is a conception. A birth is a creation. A birth, dear friend, is a character. And a birth is a commencement. It is a brand-new beginning.

But, I want to say, dear friend, when you get this commencement, that just simply means you need to grow. No baby is born full grown. But, when you get born, you get all that you need to grow with. Now, that is, God gives you all the equipment when you're first born. When you're born, you get all that you're going to get. The Bible says, "*[God] hath given [to] us*"—not *will*, but *hath*—"given [to] us all things that pertain [to] life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3) You know, when we get a baby, we don't carry the baby home from the hospital and keep it for a few months and then go back and say, "Now, would you put the ears on, please?" or, "Now, it's about ready for him to learn to walk.

Put the legs on, please.” No. You see, when you’re born, you get all you’re going to get. Whatever you got, you’ve got it. All right. Now look, the rest of your life, then, is spent developing and discovering what you got when you got born.

Have you ever watched a little baby discover his hands? A little baby doesn’t even know it has hands. It has hands, but, after a while, it discovers those hands and then learns how to hold things. And finally, it can do skillful work with those hands. But, the hands were there from birth. People talk about “getting a second blessing.” Friend, listen, you don’t get a second blessing; what you do is discover what you got in the first blessing. Do you understand that? When you receive the Lord Jesus, you received all. The fullness of God came into you. You were born again. You were made a “[*partaker*] of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4) And now, your job is to discover and to develop what you received at birth. That’s not a second blessing; that’s the first blessing that you can enjoy a million times in a million blessings—to discover what you received in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, those of you, however, who are saying, “Well, Brother Rogers, I need to be saved, but there are some things in my life, and as soon as I work them out—I’ve got some habits, and I’ve got some things that I need to straighten out—and as soon as I get that done, then I’m going to come down there, Brother Rogers, and join your church, and get baptized, and go to work for the Lord.” That’s so silly. That’d be like a man saying, “As soon as I grow up, I’ll get born.” No, no. Look, first the birth, then the growth. A birth is a commencement. It is a starting place. You’re no yesterdays; you’re all tomorrows. And you get, at that birth, that equipment that God gives you that you must discover and you must develop. And the Bible says you are to “*grow in [the] grace and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” (2 Peter 3:18) You’re not born full grown; you must grow. But you can’t grow up and then get born. You must first of all come to the Lord Jesus Christ and be born.

V. A Birth Involves a Completion

Now, let me say again the reason that Jesus used the figure of a birth—not only is a birth a commencement, but a birth is also a completion. You say, “What do you mean by that, Pastor?” I mean, dear friend, once you’re born, you’re born. A birth, in the natural realm, is a once-and-for-all experience. Nobody gets born twice in the natural realm. And a birth in the spiritual realm is a once-and-for-all experience. You don’t have to keep getting saved if you’ve been saved. God keeps you saved. I didn’t say, “if you joined a church and got baptized”; I didn’t say, “if somebody processed you.” I’m saying if you have been born again, if you have been made a partaker of the divine nature, there is a completion, and it is done.

Well, when babies are born here in Shelby County, the hospitals make a record, and

it's put on record: "Thus-and-such a baby boy—thus-and-such a baby girl—was born to these parents at this time at this place. Here's the weight. Here's the race. Here are all the facts." And those things are recorded, and that is the permanent record. When Jesus sent the seventy out, they came back, and they said—oh, they were so excited—they came back to Jesus, and they said, "[O Jesus, why,] even the devils [were] subject [to] us [in your] name." (Luke 10:17) And Jesus said, "Don't rejoice in that, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20) And the word that Jesus used for *written* here—the verb—means "it is written; it stands written." It is a fixed document, never to be erased. You know, there are some people who believe you can get saved and lost again and then get resaved again. They really believe that. They believe the recording angel, you know, he puts your name in the Lamb's Book of Life; then you sin; He rubs it out; then you get right; He puts it in; then you sin; He rubs it out; then you get right, and He writes it in again. He'll wear a hole in the page. The Bible doesn't say that you must be born again and again and again and again, but "[you] must be born again." (John 3:7) You see, in the physical realm, when you're born, that's it.

Now, my parents are here today, and I'm sure there are times when they felt like taking me back to the Good Samaritan Hospital and saying, "Would you have this thing unborn?" But you can't do that. "Oh," you say, "but wait a minute. You may die physically; and so, you may die spiritually." Friend, I want to tell you something: this outward body here might perish, but what was conceived in my mother's womb and born in the Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida, will never cease to exist. God breathed into my nostrils the breath of life. I became a living soul. And endless, dateless, measureless—through the eons of eternity—that child that was born will live forever somewhere, either in heaven or hell. What is born will never cease to exist. There is a miracle of life. And when I was born physically, something happened that can never be undone. And when you were born spiritually, something happened that can never be undone. You became a part of the Body of Christ. You became a "[partaker] of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) There was something written down. It stands written; the record is there. Thank God for that. Thank God for the security that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, a birth is a completion; it is a finished act. That's the reason I believe in the security of the believer.

There are some of you here today who'd like to be saved, but you're just saying, "Brother Rogers, I'm afraid I can't live it. I'm afraid I can't hold out." I want to tell you, if you'll come to Jesus Christ today in repentance and faith, He will give you the strength to live it, and He will keep you forever and forever.

VI. A Birth Involves a Certainty

Now, let me say, finally, that not only does birth involve a completion, but birth involves

a certainty. You see, when you're born, you ought to know it. I mean, a birth is a definite experience.

I mean, suppose I were to come to you and ask you this question: "Say, have you ever been born into the natural world?" And you were to say, "Well, I think so." I mean, my goodness, folks, you ought to know whether you've been born, huh? Look intelligent. You know if you've been born, huh? Okay. I mean, if I say, "Have you ever been born?" You say, "Well, I think so. I hope so. I'm doing the best I can." You talk to some unsaved people, and you say, "Are you a Christian? Have you ever been born again?" "Well, I think so. I hope so. I'm doing the best I can." Oh no, friend—if you're born, you ought to know it. Will Rogers went to get a passport. And they asked him for his birth certificate, and he said, "What do you want that for?" And they said, "For proof of your birth." He said, "Well, I'm here, ain't I?" You see, that ought to be enough. Listen, have you been born again? Now, if you say, "Well, I think so. I hope so. I'm doing the best I can," I don't think you understand what I'm asking you.

Or, let's turn it around and come another way. I walk up to a lady, and I say, "Lady, I have a question I want to ask you today: Are you a child of God? Have you been born again?" She says, "Yes, I really am." "Well," I say, "I've met a sister. How wonderful." And so, I get ready for her testimony. I say, "Well, tell me: When did you become a Christian? When were you born again?" She says, "Well, I've always been born again. I've always been a Christian." Well, suppose I ask you, have you ever been born? "Yep!" So far, so good. "When were you born?" "Oh, I've always been born." Well, wait a minute. Oh, me! Listen, nobody has always been born into the natural realm, and nobody always been born into the spiritual realm. There was a time when you were not, and there was a time when you were. It's a definite experience. There is a certainty about a birth.

Now, I don't mean that you have, because of some emotional experience, that you have that certainty. As a matter of fact, you may not have an emotional experience to remember. I don't remember my physical birth. It was more emotional to my mother than it was to me. I don't remember that. But, you see, the proof that I was born is right here. Amen? Here's the proof right here. You're looking at the proof. You see, some people, because there's a decision made about the second birth, can remember the point. They can say it was in thus-in-such a place, thus-and-such a time. Remember I talked to you about Billy Sunday? He said, "I can take you back to that mission and show you the knothole on the floor where I prayed to receive Christ." I remember when I prayed and received Christ. But, you know, there are some people who've been raised in a Christian home, in a different environment, and so forth. And they heard the gospel, and somehow they believed the gospel. And they started to trust the Lord, and they just know that they're saved. They couldn't tell you—they couldn't pinpoint—the exact time,

but they say, “I know that I know that I’m trusting Jesus.”

¶ Now, if you were to go from here to Alabama in an automobile and you crossed the state line, you’d know it soon as you crossed the state line: “Welcome to Alabama.” They’re living high down there now. All right, you’d know it. The minute you crossed the state line, you’d say, “Okay.” But suppose you’re flying in an airplane. You cross the same state line, but you’re on a different level. You land in Alabama; you’re there.¶

But, you see, some people are on a different level when they get converted. Some people perhaps do not have that clear line of demarcation, but there was one. The most important question that I have to ask you tonight is not, did you get saved? The most important question is, are you saved? Or, this morning, whenever it is—this afternoon. I don’t know how long I preach. But anyway, listen, the most important question is, is that person, is that man, is that woman, is that boy, is that girl sitting in your seat right now trusting Jesus? Does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you’re a child of God? Do you have the birthmarks of the believer? Has something happened? Have you become a partaker of the divine nature? A birth is a certainty, not a “hope so, maybe so, doing the best I can” sort of thing. That’s the reason we can say, “Praise God. I know that I’m saved.” And so, among other reasons, I believe that’s why Jesus told Nicodemus that you have to be born again.

Now, there’s another great difference between the natural birth and the supernatural birth: you didn’t have any choice about your first birth, but, thank God, you have a choice about your second birth. You can say, as the Virgin Mary said, “*Be it [done] unto me according to thy word.*” (Luke 1:38)

Conclusion

Now, this new birth that I’m talking about, friend, is not a luxury; it’s a necessity. Jesus said, “[*You*] *must be born again.*” (John 3:7) May I tell you that if you’re not born again, you’re going to die and go to hell. I’m not trying to be blunt, but I’m trying to be understood. This is not a luxury; it’s a necessity. Did you know that if you’re born but once, you’re going to die twice? The first death is the death of the body; the second death is the death of the spirit. That does not mean the cessation of the spirit, but that means that your spirit will go on through the eons of eternity without God, living in a state of perpetual death, separated from God, lost—forever lost—to be punished in hell, separated from God. The Bible calls that “the second death”: “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:15)—“*this is the second death.*” (Revelation 20:14) If you’re not born twice, you’re going to die twice: once, your body is going to die; but then, your spirit will live in a state of perpetual death that the Bible calls “the second death.” But, pay attention: if you’re born twice, you can only die once—only once. Just the body is all that can die. One of these days, you may

hear them say, “Adrian Rogers is dead.” You may even come to my funeral. But don’t you weep for me, because I’ll be kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory. Jesus said, “[He that] liveth and believeth in me shall never die,” (John 11:26) talking about our spirit. That which is born twice can never die, because, dear friend, we receive spiritual life and we’re going to live forever.

A great preacher who lived many years ago was named George Whitfield, and George Whitfield loved to preach from this text that says, “*Ye must be born again.*” (John 3:7) As a matter of fact, so many times he preached it that people almost knew what he was going to preach before he started: “*Ye must be born again.*” (John 3:7) Someone came to him and said, “Mr. Whitfield, why do you always preach, ‘Ye must be born again. Ye must be born again. Ye must be born again?’” He said, “I’ll tell you why: it is because ye must be born again.” Amen? But Jesus said it as well as Mr. Whitfield.

Have you been born again? You say, “Frankly, Preacher, I don’t know how.” All right, Jesus told this same intellectual man in this same chapter; He said, “Nicodemus, I’m going to the cross to die.” “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but [should] have [everlasting] life.*” (John 3:14–15) Friend, those are the facts of life. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Acts 16:31) It is so simple. You may not understand all that I’ve said about completion, and conception, and character, but you can understand this: that Christ died on the cross for your sins and that, if you will believe on Him and receive Him by faith, the Bible says sweetly, surely, sublimely, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31) And today, you can be born again if you’ll just say, “Be it done unto me, dear Lord, according to thy word.” And the Spirit of God and the Word of God will work a miracle in your life.†

Three Miracle Births

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 7, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 3:1-7

Outline

Introduction

I. The Deficiency of the Natural Birth

II. The Efficiency of the Virgin Birth

III. The Sufficiency of the New Birth

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, that is a great song beautifully done. If you would like some CDs or tapes that Bucky has done, they're available in the west lobby after the service, and I know that you will want to avail yourself of those.

Find now, if you would, in the Word of God, John chapter 3, talking about God in human flesh.

I had a preacher friend who was in the waiting room while his wife was in the delivery room—waiting, waiting, waiting—as many men have done. Those big doors burst open, the doctor came out, both hands in the air, and he was shouting, “It’s a miracle! It’s a miracle!” Can you imagine how my pastor friend felt? He said, “Doctor, get hold of yourself. Have I had quadruplets? What is it? What is the miracle?” “Oh,” he said, “I just get so excited every time a baby is born. It’s just a miracle. It is a miracle.” And, you know, every natural birth is a miracle. But not only is a natural birth a miracle; the virgin birth is a miracle, a greater miracle, and the new birth is a miracle.

There was a man named Nicodemus who wanted to understand miracles, and he came to Jesus by night. John chapter 3—if I’ve not told you to turn to it yet, turn to it—look in verse 1: “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” Nicodemus was enraptured by the miracles that Jesus had done. “Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Now, Nicodemus wanted to understand miracles, and Jesus is saying, “Nicodemus, if you want to understand miracles, you’re going to have to become a miracle.” “Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be

born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" He's saying, "Lord, I've been there, done that. Now, what? I can't be born a second time." Jesus explains in verse 5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily—which literally means, brothers and sisters, truly, truly—I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee—now, listen to this—ye must be born again." This is a very familiar passage of Scripture, but, oh, what an instruction it has for us as we think of God in human flesh.

Now, who was this man Nicodemus, anyway? Well, he was a marvelous man. His very name, Nicodemus, means superior—and he was a superior man. For example, he was Jewish, and they're the chosen race. Not only was he Jewish; he was a Pharisee. They were the most religious of the religious. And not only was he Jewish and a Pharisee; he was a ruler of the Jews. That means he was a member of the Sanhedrin. That's the Jewish high court. He was one of 71 in all the land of Israel. I mean, he was up there. He was at the very top echelon. What a shock it must have been to this well-born man with a pedigree to be told that he needed to be born again.

Now, what we're going to do is to look at the necessity of the virgin birth. We're going to understand why God could not just simply dwell in heaven, and look down, and say, "Well, I forgive men."

I. The Deficiency of the Natural Birth

First thing I want to lay on your heart is what I'm going to call the deficiency of the natural birth—the deficiency of the natural birth. Now, Jesus told this man, in verse 6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Now, we've all had a fleshy birth. We've all been born of the flesh. Now, notice this. Nicodemus was born into the natural world. He had a natural birth. He was born of the flesh. Now, because he had a natural birth, he was what I would call a natural-born sinner. There was something wrong with his natural birth, as we're going to find out. And he's going to find out that one birth is not enough to get him to heaven. He was born into the natural world, and, therefore, he was bound to the sinful world, because he was born with a sinful nature. And so have you been born with a sinful nature. Every mother's child is born with a sinful nature. I want to give you some verses that'll back that up.

For example, look in Psalm 51, verse 5. Don't turn to it, but jot it down. David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me." Now, he didn't mean that his mother was sinning when she conceived him. He meant that he was conceived with a sinful nature.

And then, Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3. Paul speaks about our behavior before

we were saved, and he says, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh—underscore that—fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others.” By nature—by nature—children of wrath; the lust of the flesh. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Now, we were all born of the flesh, and here’s why we do what we do—Galatians 5, verses 19 through 21: “Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings—and if we haven’t got to you yet—and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Now, you see, he was born into the natural world, and, therefore, he was bound to the sinful world. You say, “Well, I haven’t done all of those things.” Friend, it is not the amount of sin; it is the fact of sin that condemns us. More people drown in 9 feet of water than drown in 90 feet of water. If we are sinners by nature, God must judge sin. And don’t get the idea that we can take a little child, and, if we raise that child in a proper environment, that child will not sin. I’m telling you, if there was some way that you could take a newborn baby, and raise that baby in isolation by remote control, that child would still have a sinful nature.

Nicodemus was born into the natural world. He was bound to the sinful world. And he was blind to the spiritual world. He was blind to the spiritual world. Look what Jesus said to him, in verse 3: “Nicodemus, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” A man without Christ, a man with a natural birth, he cannot see; he cannot perceive spiritual things. An education is not going to help him to do it. You can’t educate somebody into the kingdom of God. Man doesn’t need education; he needs transformation. Nicodemus was a master in Israel. “Art thou a master in Israel,” he said, “and you don’t understand these things?” By the way, when you’re talking to a person who’s not saved, don’t scold him for not seeing any more than you would scold a blind man for not seeing. You see, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, but he had a greater night in his soul, the darkness of his soul. Why? Well, look in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18. The Bible speaks of those who are blind to the spiritual world, and he says, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Now, you may have 20/20 sight, but you have a blind heart. Now, that tells me this: that man needs more than light—man needs sight.

There’s light in this building, but, if we have a blind person here today, they don’t see it. Man needs more than light—he needs sight. You need to pray, “O God, open my eyes.” Preaching is not going to bring you to Jesus Christ—preaching alone. God has to

open your eyes. This room can be full of truth and yet the gospel be hidden from you. Second Corinthians 4, verses 3 and 4: “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost, 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 in the image of God, should shine unto them.” There are spiritually blind people listening to me today, and there may be nothing wrong with the truth that I’m preaching, but they can’t see it. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see.” It takes more than preaching to get people saved. The Holy Spirit must open blind eyes. And that’s why, brothers and sisters, when we come to service, we must pray that God the Holy Spirit will do His work and open blind eyes.

Now, the first thing that we’ve been talking about is the deficiency—the deficiency—of the natural birth. Born into the natural world, bound to the sinful world, blind to the spiritual world—that’s old Nicodemus.

II. The Efficiency of the Virgin Birth

Now, number two: I want you to see, secondly, the efficiency of the virgin birth—the efficiency of the virgin birth. The efficiency of the virgin birth makes up for the deficiency of the natural birth. Now, that gets us to the question, why did Jesus Christ come to earth? Why didn’t God from heaven just simply save us? Well, now, why did Jesus come? Look again, in verses 1 and 2: “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” Now, Nicodemus thought that Jesus was a teacher come from God—and He was a teacher come from God—but He was more than a teacher come from God; He was God come to teach. Now, it’s very important that you understand this. Jesus was God in human flesh. He explains this to Nicodemus. Nicodemus called Him a teacher come from God, but Jesus says, “No, Nicodemus, I am more than that.” Look in verses 14 and through 17. Jesus, speaking of Himself, said, “And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up...”—now, notice He was human. He called Himself Jesus, comparing Himself to that serpent lifted up in the wilderness, the Son of man—“even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life—now, watch this. You know this verse—For God so loved the world, that he gave his—now, here it is—only begotten Son—His only begotten Son, His *monogana*, His only begotten Son; never another like Him. Of all of the people that have ever lived in all of the history of mankind, there is only one that could be said of him, He is the only begotten Son—“that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world...—you see, He was sent—sent

not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” Apart from the only begotten Son of God, apart, therefore, from the virgin birth, there is no salvation. God sent His Son through the portals of a virgin’s womb to this earth, God in human flesh, that we might be saved.

What is the efficiency of His virgin birth? Number one: It is a ministry of revelation. Remember now that Nicodemus is born blind. He cannot see spiritually. And his blindness is a willful blindness. Jesus is going to explain that in a moment. You see, there is what the devil does, but there’s what man does, and the devil blinds the minds of people, but, blind people, Jesus goes on to say, hate the light, and won’t come to the light, in the spiritual realm.

Helen Keller, that precious little baby, unable to see, and unable to hear, her mother held that little baby in her arms, and looked down, and cried and wept uncontrollably, and said, “Oh, Helen, Helen, Helen, your mother loves you so much. How can a mother help this poor, precious baby, who cannot see and who cannot hear, to know how much I love her?” God loves us. But the sad thing is that while little Helen Keller, not of her own will, could not see and could not hear, our Lord speaks of those who are willingly blind. Look, if you will, in verses 19 through 20: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” There are people in this auditorium, there are people who are listening through television, who will be repulsed by what I’m saying, because they know that, if they accept the truth, there must be a radical change of life, and they hate the light, and they will not come to the light, because their deeds are evil. Sometimes, we smile at a child who’s afraid of the dark. How ludicrous for a full-grown man to be afraid of the light, but many are. Now, why did Jesus come? It was a ministry of revelation, that the blind might see.

But, secondly, a ministry of redemption. Look, again, in verse 16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.” Well, why did He have to come to earth to redeem us? You need to understand the whole scheme of things. God is just. God gave dominion to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve turned that dominion over to Satan. It was legally lost. Satan, the usurper, however, conned Adam and Eve into turning all of this over to him, but, nonetheless, they did it. God gave dominion to Adam and Eve, and they yielded it over to Satan, and Satan became the god of this world. Now, listen very carefully. It was lost by a man, and it must be—it must be; never fail to understand this—it must be redeemed by a man, for God to be legally just and righteous. You see, God needed a man to pay the sin debt. Without shedding of blood is no remission of

sins. That's why the Lord Jesus came. There needed to be a sacrifice, but the sacrifice needed to be—are you listening—a sinless sacrifice. Now, a sinner could only die for his own sin, but Jesus, the Son of God, was perfectly sinless. Therefore, He could die as my substitute. Now, this is why He had to be the Son of God, God's only begotten Son.

For example, had He been a son of Adam, what could be said about Him? "In Adam all die." We all have the sinful nature of Adam. Did Jesus have the sinful nature of Adam? No, because He's not the son of Adam. He is the Son of God. You see, Jesus came as He did, born of a virgin, without a human father, without being, therefore, a descendant of Adam. He came as He did, virgin born, to be what He was—sinless. He was what He was—sinless—to be what He was—an atoning sacrifice. He did what He did—atone on the cross—that we might be forgiven, and saved, and be what we are—children of God. You see, without the virgin birth, there is no salvation. I mean, if there'd been some other way, God would have taken it. Do you think that God would have allowed His darling Son to hang naked on a cross, bruised, battered, spit upon, if there was some other way? I mean, if that were true, I'd hate to meet that God in a dark alley. What kind of a God would allow that to happen, if there were some other way? Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Without the virgin birth—no sinless Savior; without the sinless Savior—no atoning sacrifice; with no atoning sacrifice—no new birth; no new birth—no hope of heaven. Thank God for Christmas Day, that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He came to earth, born of a virgin, God in human flesh. He was born of a virgin, that you might be born again. He came to earth, that you might go to heaven. He became the Son of man, that you might become the sons and the daughters of the Almighty.

III. The Sufficiency of the New Birth

Now, here's the third thing I want to lay on your heart. I want you to see, not only the deficiency—the deficiency—of the natural birth; I want you also to see the efficiency of the virgin birth; and then, finally, the sufficiency of the new birth. Because of what Jesus did, we are sufficient to stand before God and to have fellowship with God, to be born again. Look in John 3, verses 4 through 6: "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Now, it's clear why Jesus is saying that we must be born

again. Because, when we're born again, we lay hold of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross.

Now, I'm glad that our Lord described it by a birth, because a birth is something that every human being knows something about. That's how we all got here. Let me tell you why being saved is like a birth. Number one: in a birth, there is a conception. There must be a conception. Jesus said, in John 3, verse 5: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now, think about it. In a birth, there must be a conception before there can be a birth. Now, in order to have a conception, you have to have two parents. Who are the two parents in the new birth? The Spirit of God and the Word of God—"be born of water and of the Spirit." Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, why do you say "born of water" for the Word of God?" Because Jesus here is using an analogy. Jesus is using an illustration. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, water is a symbol of the Word of God. The Bible, in Ephesians chapter 5, speaks of the "washing of water by the word." It is the Word of God that impregnates people, so that a birth takes place. Notice again in 1 Peter 1, verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed...—now, He's talking here about the seed that causes conception—not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." You see, the Word of God is the seed that impregnates. But while the Word of God is the father, the Spirit of God is like the mother, and there comes a conception. These two parents come together, born of water and of the Spirit. Then something happens, a gestation begins that brings about a new birth. Now, you say, "What part do I have in it, Pastor?" You provide the womb of faith—you provide the womb of faith. When the Spirit of God and the Word of God come together in the womb of faith, a conception takes place, and, therefore, a wonderful birth transpires.

Now, learn this about parents. Parents do not create babies. They don't manufacture babies. All they do is pass life on. Dead people don't pass on life. Life comes from life. And so, what a baby is doing is just receiving transferred life from the parents. Now, when we get saved, we are receiving life. The Word of God and the Spirit of God transfer the life of God into us. Everybody thinks about being saved as going to heaven, going to heaven, going to heaven. Well, we do go to heaven. That's just a by-product. Being saved is not getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man. It is the life of God. That's the reason Jesus said, in John 10:10, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." So, we're spiritually dead until we are born again, and then that life is transferred into us. And so, in a birth, there's a conception.

Now, secondly, look: In a birth a character is produced—a character is produced. I

am the sum total of the genetic makeup of my mother and father. Everything that was in my mother and father was in me, is in me. I am the genetic offspring of my parents. Now, therefore, I am, with my natural characteristics, the sum total of that which came about in my conception. Now, when you are born again, you have the characteristics of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”—verse 6. Now, it is only natural, therefore, that the baby have the characteristics of the parents. Second Peter chapter 1, verse 4, says that we are partakers of the divine nature. Now, God, who sired you, that life that is passed on to you is the life now that resides in you, and, therefore, your character is going to be changed. There is a divine change that takes place. Now, you see—I’ve said this often—but a Christian is not like a tadpole who finally graduates into being a frog. It’s not just that we sort of get better and better,, and then we’re suddenly Christian. No, no. A Christian is not like a tadpole that becomes a frog. That’s not a miracle. A Christian is a frog that becomes a prince by the kiss of grace. It is supernatural. There is a transformation that takes place, and a new character is produced.

Now, I’ve thought about what are the characteristics of those who’ve been twice-born. What are the traits of the twice-born? May I tick them off to you very quickly, and see if they’re in you.

Number one: If you have been truly saved, you’re going to love the Lord Jesus and His Word. “Pastor, how do you know that?” Because you’re going to have the nature of God. Does God love His Son? God the Father says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” One of the ways that I know that I know I’m saved is I love Jesus Christ. Do you love Jesus? Do you? I mean, do you love Him? I’m not asking, do you believe in Him? Is there a love for the Son of God in your heart? If there is not, you ought to ask yourself, do I have the nature of God in me, because God is love? And the Bible tells us very clearly and plainly, “we love Him because He first loved us.”

I’ll tell you the second trait of the twice-born. There’s going to be the inner witness of the Spirit. God’s Spirit is going to give you an awareness that you belong to Christ. Why? Because the Bible says we are born of the Spirit, in verse 5. And Romans chapter 8, verse 16, says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Now, what is the witness of the Spirit? It is not goose bumps, liver shivers, icicles running up and down your spine. It’s not emotion. I’m not opposed to emotion, but I’ve often told you that your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature; salvation is the deepest work of God. God doesn’t do His deepest work in the shallowest part. Then, if it’s not emotion, what is the witness of the Spirit? It is awareness—awareness. You are aware that you belong to God. The Holy Spirit of God gives you that awareness. This is a part of your new character.

I'll tell you what else you're going to find, when you are twice-born. You're going to find a desire for holiness—you're going to find a desire for holiness. You're going to want to be holy, because the nature of God is holy. God is holy. "Be ye, therefore, holy, for I am holy." Now, that doesn't mean that you'll never sin. There's not a perfect man, woman, in this building today. But look up here, and look at the preacher. You're looking at a man who desires to be holy. Do you desire to be holy? You know, people say, "Well, if I believe in eternal security, I'd just get saved and sin all I want to." I sin all I want to. I don't want to. I don't want to. Before I was saved, I was running to sin. Now I am running from sin. I have a desire to be holy. That's one of the traits of the twice-born. A character is produced when you are born. I have the characteristics of my earthly parents, and, when I am saved, I ought to have the characteristics of my heavenly parents.

I'll tell you another trait of the twice-born. You have a desire to share Jesus Christ. Now, we may not all do it the same way. We can't all be preachers, but we can all be reachers. I mean, you ought to have a desire that others would know Jesus Christ. From the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ to this moment, there's been a desire in my heart to share with others what I have. I mean, can you believe that you have the answer to eternal life? Can you believe that you know the way, the truth, and the life, and those around you don't know Jesus, and you have no desire to share it? I've often said, if you can't give it away, you ought to give it up, if you don't have a desire to share the Lord Jesus Christ. What am I saying? Listen. I'm saying that, when somebody is born, there's a conception, but when there's a conception, there is a character that is born, a characteristic that is going to take place.

Now, here's a third thing I want you to notice about a birth. A birth, when a birth takes place, there is a finality—a finality. Once in the flesh, and you're only born once in the spirit. Now, the birth in the spirit is called a second birth, but it's not a second of the same kind. That's why Nicodemus couldn't understand. He said, "How can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter the second time in his mother's womb and be born?" There are no reverse gears in life. I mean, I can't go back and be born again. Jesus said, "That's right. But that which is born of the flesh is flesh; now that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Nobody is ever born twice physically. Nobody is ever born twice spiritually. Once you're saved, you're saved. You'll never find in the Bible where anybody was saved twice. Now, you want to make me look like a fool? Then come and point it out, and I'll be honest, and we'll stand up here in the pulpit, and you can say, "Here it is, Pastor; you told a lie. Here's where somebody was born twice spiritually." You just won't find it—it's not there—friend, any more than you could go out in this material world and find somebody who has been born physically twice. You see, a birth

is a finality. Once you get saved, you're saved. And, if a baby is born here in our city, then down at the courthouse they write the name down in a record. Well, notice this, in Luke 10, verse 20: "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." And the Greek construction there literally means, they stand written in heaven. Nobody can be unborn. A birth is a finality.

Now, I promise you, precious friend, if you give your heart to Jesus Christ, He will save you, and He'll save you forever—the finality. That which was born in West Palm Beach Florida in the Good Samaritan Hospital, who's preaching to you right now, I became a living creature. There'll never be a time when I'll cease to exist. My soul, my being, will be in existence, when the sun, the moon, and the stars have grown cold. And, when you get saved, the second birth, on and on and on—it is a finality.

But I'll tell you something else. A birth is a starting place—a starting place. That is, when you get born, you're all tomorrows; you're no yesterdays. One of the things you'll never see is a policeman waiting to arrest a newborn baby for crimes he's done. No, no, no, no. You see, when we are born again, our sins are in the grave of God's forgetfulness. We are new creatures. God has removed our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. And who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? If we stumble and fall, we can be cleansed and forgiven, but that sin will never be placed against our name.

Number five: A birth is the beginning of a growth cycle. Now, when you're born, then you want to begin to grow. Now, I'm going to ask some of you today to give your heart to Jesus. You may come down there and say, "Well, you know, I just don't think I can live it. I'm not strong enough. I don't understand enough. I don't know the Bible like all these other people. This and this and this." Hey, of course not—of course not. You'll be a baby. You'll be a baby. You have to learn how to walk. You have to learn how to talk. You have to learn how to work and do these things. That's what babies do: they grow up. That's why we're here as a church: to help you to grow up. Don't let the fact that you don't have a Ph.D. in theology keep you from coming to Jesus today. You come just as you are—just as you are—and then you begin to grow. First Peter chapter 2, verse 2, says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." I've been growing for a long time, and I've got a lot of growing to do. We're all in a state of growing. Friend, when you come to Jesus, then you begin to discover what all you got when you got born.

Have you ever watched a little child discover its hands? That's interesting to watch a little baby just begin to discover his toes and all this kind of stuff. The baby gets all the equipment. You don't take the baby later on and say, "Now, put the ears on. Now, put

the nose on. Now, put..." No, no, listen. When you get saved, you get it all. It's there. But now, you spend the rest of your life discovering what you got when you got Jesus. People talk about the second blessing. Really, the second blessing is discovering what you got in the first blessing. And the third blessing is discovering you didn't discover it all in the second blessing. There's just more and more and more that you get in the Lord Jesus Christ, but you grow.

Now, there are some people who are going to say, "Well, when I quit it, and when I learn this, and when I do this, then I'm going to come and give my heart to Jesus." Do you know what that's saying? I'm going to grow up and then get born. You got it backwards. You're not going to grow until you are born again and begin to grow.

Now, next: When you are born again, just as in the natural birth, you get a father and brothers and sisters; you get the family of God. Now, you may not know who your earthly father is, or he may be dead, and you may be an only child, but, when you come into God's family, you come into a big family, and God is your heavenly Father. You know, we talk about our responsibility to God; have you ever thought about God's responsibility to you? I mean, He's fathered you. Now, friend, your heavenly Father will never be arrested for child neglect. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." God will take care of His own. That's what Jesus is talking about there in the Sermon on the Mount, when He's telling us not to worry. If an earthly father feeds his children, and feeds his chickens, how much more shall your heavenly Father take care of you?

Now, next—and I must hurry: A birth has a certainty to it. I mean, if you're born physically, you ought to know it. You know, suppose I were to ask you, "Have you ever been born," talking about your natural birth, and you say, "Well, I don't know. I think so. I hope so, maybe so. I'm doing the best I can." Wow. Bring the butterfly net. Now, listen. If you're born, you ought to know it. And, if you're born again, you ought to know it. I mean, there is a divine certainty. The Bible teaches a know-so salvation; not a hope-so, maybe-so, perhaps-so salvation, but a know-so salvation. I tell in the Discovery Class about Will Rogers—no relative of mine, I wish he were—from Oklahoma, the humorist and philosopher of yesteryear. The story is told that Will Rogers went to get a passport. He wanted to travel. They said, "Well, we need your birth certificate." He said, "What for?" They said, "Proof of your birth." He said, "Well, I'm here, ain't I?" Friend, the proof of your birth is you, is the person there trusting Jesus right now as your personal Lord and Savior. And, friend, I want to tell you something. You can say, "I know that I know that I've been saved," if you do what God says to do, and give your heart to Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Now, the distinction between your natural birth and your new birth is this: You didn't have any choice in your natural birth. You do have a choice about the new birth.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." That's what He told Nicodemus. That's the way you're born again—by trusting Christ. How many in this building can say, "Pastor Rogers, I know, by the grace of God, that I have been born again, and those traits of the twice-born that you mentioned are in my heart; I have a love for Jesus; I have the witness of the Spirit; I desire to be holy, and I have a desire to share Jesus Christ, and I really believe that I can honestly lift my hand and say I know Christ as my personal Savior"? If you can give me that testimony, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you lift your hand up. Just hold it up. That's wonderful. Take it down. Now, if you couldn't lift your hand, I know that you're concerned, or you wouldn't be here today, and I want to pray for you, help you to receive Jesus. Know, dear friend, He wants to save you today. He loves you. He loves you. He died for you. There's no way that you can be saved, apart from the death of the virgin-born Savior, God in human flesh. But, will you trust Him? Will you right now pray a prayer like this: Lord, You have loved me so much that You sent Jesus, the virgin-born Son of God, God in human flesh, to pay my sin debt. I can hardly take it in, but, Lord, I receive it by faith. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Father, I pray that many will do that today. In your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing now. Don't even gather your books. Just look right here at me. This is such an important time. Those of you who are prayer warriors, begin to pray. Oh, there are so many precious souls here that need Christ. I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. This is an important time. Be in a spirit of prayer. If it's an emergency, of course, you may leave. But standing down here at the front, at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front, will be a man of God, a minister of our church, to welcome you as you come. And for those in the balcony, there'll be a minister standing under that banner to my right that says Redeemer up in that corner, over in this corner under that banner that says Messiah to welcome all of those of you in the balcony who will be coming. And, if you prayed that prayer with me, I want you to settle it and seal it by coming forward. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you." Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father." "Well, Pastor Rogers, I've never done that before. What happens? When I come down there, what should I say?" Well, if you can say this, say this: "I'm trusting Jesus—I'm

trusting Jesus.” “Well, Pastor, then what will happen?” Well, we’ll rejoice. We’ll give you some Scripture to stand on. We’ll answer any questions that we can answer, and seal it with you in prayer. Thank God you can go home saying, “Yes, I trusted Christ; I was not ashamed of Him.” Well, you say, “Pastor, there’s still questions I have. There are some things I still don’t understand.” Well, come and tell us, “Look, I need some more help.” We have an open Bible. We’ll guide you in this decision.

Then there are others of you who are saved and you know it. Your church membership may be elsewhere, or you’ve never had a church membership. I want to invite you to come at the same time, if you know that you’re saved, and say, “I want to place my membership here,” and the minister will tell you how you may become a member of this church. And may I say this: that every believer ought to be a member—a member—of a local New Testament church, if at all possible. Now, there are many wonderful churches. You’re welcome to make Bellevue your church home. We would love to have you come, and, when you come, you say, “I want to place my membership here.” Would you do that? As a matter of fact, if you need to do that, “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” You be the first one down here, if you can, and lead the way for these others who need to come and acknowledge Jesus Christ. Again, respectively, I’m going to ask that no one leave during the invitation; as a matter of fact, not until the benediction. It’ll be just a few more minutes. And be in a spirit of prayer.

Now, let’s pray. Father God, I pray that You’ll bring the lost to Jesus. And those who prayed, Lord, help them to mean it enough to step out. And those, dear Lord, that need to be a part of our fellowship, Lord, speak to their hearts. In Jesus’ name.

Let’s stand together. You come.

Three Miracle Births

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 7, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 3:1–7

Outline

Introduction

I. The Deficiency of the Natural Birth

II. The Efficiency of the Virgin Birth

III. The Sufficiency of the New Birth

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen. What a great song, and I know that you'll want to pick up some of that music in the west lobby at the close of this service.

Be finding John the third chapter, a very familiar chapter to you in the Word of God. We're talking about God in human flesh. Question: If God loves the world, why didn't God up in heaven just simply say, "Look, I forgive you. Are you sorry for your sin? Do you repent of your sin? I forgive you." Why did Jesus have to come? Why the agony of Gethsemane? Why bloody Calvary? Why did Jesus come to this earth, God in human flesh? Well, we're going to try to answer that and get a great blessing from the answer to that question.

I had a preacher friend who was in the waiting room of the hospital and waiting for his wife to give birth. As you know, that's an awful time that we men have to go through. And he was waiting there, and those big doors burst open, and that doctor came out dressed in his gown, saying, "It's a miracle! It's a miracle! It's a miracle!" The man's heart started going like that. He said, "Doctor, what is it? What is it?" He thought maybe he had quadruplets or something. Oh, he just said, "Excuse me. Every time I see a baby born, I just realize what a miracle that is." And it is a miracle. The natural birth is a miracle, and the virgin birth is a miracle, and the new birth is a miracle.

Let's look here, beginning in John chapter 3, verse 1: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." Now, if we were to stop right there, I would remind you that this man Nicodemus was a very important man. His name, Nicodemus, means superior. He was a superior man. And the Bible says here that he was of the Pharisees. Now, not only was he religious, he was in the highest echelon of religion. To be a Pharisee was a great attainment. And then it also says he was a ruler

of the Jews. That means he's a part of the chosen race. But not only a part of the chosen race, the Jewish race, he is a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court. He was one of only 71 in all of the land. Now, this man was not a 6 or a 7 in the eyes of men; he was a 9 or a 10. He was an important man. "And the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus had seen Jesus opening blind eyes, straightening withered limbs, unstopping deaf ears, loosing dumb tongues. Nicodemus had seen that. He said, "Surely God is with this man. We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles except God be with him." And Jesus says to him, in effect, "Nicodemus, you want to understand miracles? Then you're going to have to become a miracle." Look in verse 3: "Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Now, there are no reverse gears in life. "I can't go back and enter into my mother's womb and be born. I've been there, done that. Now, what?" "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?" Verse 5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily"—now, when Jesus says verily, verily, that means truly, truly—"I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." What marvelous material there is for our hearts and our minds today, and we're going to understand why God came in human flesh. It must have been a shock to this erudite, educated, dignified man of Israel to be told that one birth was not enough for him, that he needed to be born again. May I just pause here to say, friend, if Nicodemus needed to be born again, every man, woman, boy and girl in this place needs to be born again because none here in the flesh could even begin to measure up to this man Nicodemus.

I. The Deficiency of the Natural Birth

Three things I want to lay on your heart. First of all, the deficiency of the natural birth. Now, Nicodemus had already had one birth, but Jesus said in John, 3, verse 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Now, what is the deficiency of the natural birth? Well, first of all, Nicodemus was born into the natural world. He had a birth like all of us have had a birth. And I'm so glad that God uses the illustration of a birth for salvation because that's something universal, that's something we all know something about. But Jesus is saying, "Nicodemus, one birth for you is not enough. There is something deficient in your natural birth." Now, Nicodemus was born into the natural world and he

was bound—listen—he was bound to the sinful world. He was born with a sinful nature.

I want you to jot these verses down—Psalm 51, verse 5—the prophet David said, “Behold, I was shapened in iniquity—shapened in iniquity—in sin did my mother conceive me.” Now, he didn’t mean that his mother was in an adulterous relationship when he was conceived, but what he meant was, “I had a sinful nature the moment I was conceived. I was shapened in iniquity.” Or, let me give you this verse—Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3. The Bible says there we are by nature the children of wrath. That is, we are born with a sinful nature. That sweet, little baby that was born into your house, that little child, is born with a depraved, sinful nature. We are by nature—by nature, by nature—the children of wrath. Nicodemus had had a natural birth, and, therefore, he was by nature a child of wrath. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” And what is the flesh like? Put this verse down—Galatians chapter 5, beginning in verse 19: “Now, the works of the flesh—that is, your natural birth—listen—the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings—and in case he hasn’t got to you yet—and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Now, this catalog of sins is true of all of us. You say, “Well, I’ve never done all of those things.” That’s not the point. It is not the amount of sin; it is the fact of sin that condemns us. And if we break one law, we don’t tell the judge, “Look at all the laws I’ve not broken.” The Bible says, “He that keepeth the whole law, and yet offends in one point, the same is guilty of all.” Which of us would ever say we’ve never had a prideful thought? Which of us can say we’ve never lusted, or we have always been scrupulously honest and kind and done that which we ought to do? No. The Bible says, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The dirty well is our sin nature; the dirty water is the sins that come out of that well. We are by nature the children of wrath.

I told you sometime ago about a missionary who was moved into a missionary cottage on the field. And she was a good housekeeper, and the floor was dirty. And so she wanted to clean the floor, and she got her a scrub brush and a pail of soapy water and began to scrub the floor. And the dirt began to come up, and she scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed, and rinsed and scrubbed, and rinsed and scrubbed, and she finally threw up her hands and said, “I don’t believe I’ll ever get this dirty floor clean.” Somebody just smiled and said, ‘I’ll tell you why. It’s a dirt floor.’ She’s scrubbing a dirt floor. Now, friend, that dirt floor is our nature, and we can scrub it all we want, but we are by nature the children of wrath. Here was Nicodemus. He was born into the natural world, he was bound to the sinful world, and he was blind to the spiritual world. Now,

Jesus says to this man, Except you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. Look in verse 3: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Now, he was well educated. Jesus said he was a master in Israel. That is, he was a man who was learned. He was very religious, but he was still spiritually blind. He came to Jesus by night, but there was a greater darkness in his soul; he could not see.

Now, friends, let me tell you something. If you know a friend who’s not a Christian, don’t try to argue with that person. Nobody was ever argued into the kingdom of heaven. His problem is that he cannot see. Would you scold a blind man for not seeing? “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.” Now, he may have had 20/20 sight, but spiritually he was blind, and he could not see. Ephesians 4, verse 18, describes it: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Now, the eyes may be fine, but the heart is blind. There are people listening to me right now. They have not got a clue as to what I’m saying, what it’s all about, and they never will have, until the Holy Spirit of God opens their understanding. But a blind man sitting in this building would be foolish to say there’s no light just because he cannot see it. There is light, but man needs more than light. Man needs sight. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see.” That’s the reason we need to pray to God, “Oh, God, open the eyes of those who have been blinded, that the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ might shine unto them.” Because, friend, it takes more than preaching to get somebody saved; it takes the work of the Holy Spirit of God. And that’s the reason before I ever come out here I get on my knees and pray, and that’s the reason you ought to pray and say, “Oh, God, anoint the service,” and for those who need Jesus Christ, “Lord God, give them sight.” It doesn’t matter how much education they have. Nicodemus was a master in Israel, but Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see.” He was born into the natural world, he was bound to the sinful world, he was blind to the spiritual world. That’s what I call, number one, the deficiency of the natural birth.

II. The Efficiency of the Virgin Birth

Now, number two: I want you to see the efficiency of the virgin birth. Why was Jesus born? To make up for the deficiency in our natural birth. Now, Nicodemus says to Jesus, “I know that you’re a teacher come from God.” Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi...—the word Rabbi means teacher—Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these

miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” Well, he was partly right. Jesus was a teacher come from God, but he was not totally right, because Jesus was more than a teacher come from God. Listen—Jesus was God come to teach. He was God come to teach. He was God who stepped out of heaven, came to this earth, suffered, bled, and died. He was God in human flesh. And this same chapter teaches that. Now, go on down to verse 14—Jesus is talking now to Nicodemus, and Jesus says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up”—He called Himself Son of man. That speaks of His humanity. But stay on. Now, listen—“must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. Now, listen. Here’s John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.” How did Jesus Christ come into this world? He came into this world through the portals of a virgin’s womb. He is the only begotten Son of God, the *monogenes*. That’s a term used only of the Son of God. Never another like Him. He is the God man. He is God’s only begotten Son. That which was conceived in the womb of Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God, and He was begotten of God never like another man. He is the virgin-born Son of God.

Now, the question comes again. Why did Jesus have to come? Why dark Gethsemane? Why bloody Calvary? Why all of that? Why couldn’t God just say, “I forgive you”? What is the efficiency of the virgin birth? Well, first of all, Jesus came as a ministry in the flesh, a ministry of revelation, the only way we could know God. The Son of man has displayed God. You want to know what God is like? Look at the Lord Jesus Christ, who could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen my Father.” Now, remember that Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see.” So Jesus has come to open eyes so that they might see.

I read of Helen Keller. Her mother took that little baby, who was blind and could not see, and deaf and could not hear—just a helpless baby—and Helen Keller’s mother held that baby in her arms and said, “Oh, Helen, little Helen, my precious baby, I love you so much. How can Mother let you know? My darling, you cannot see, you cannot hear. How can I let you know how loved you are?” And you know the miracle story of how finally they broke through and were able to communicate with this child.

Surely the heavenly Father must say to lost mankind, “I love you; I love you so much.” But the problem is that mankind is willfully blind—willfully blind. Look, if you will, in the Word of God, in verses 19 and 20. Here’s what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” And so a person is

spiritually blind, but that's not the worst part. He doesn't want to see. There are people who are listening to me right now—I'll guarantee you, I've preached long enough to know this—they're turning me off, they're shutting me out, they don't want to hear, because if they hear, if they understand, there must come a lifestyle change, and they love evil. They love darkness rather than light. We may laugh at a little child who's afraid of the dark, but how tragic when a grown man is afraid of the light and he will not come to the light. He is inherently blind, and then he is willfully blind, because he will not come. So Jesus came, first of all, in the flesh as a ministry of revelation to let us know, to let us see, to let us understand.

But not only a ministry of revelation; a ministry of redemption. He came to save. That's what John 3, verses 16 through 18, says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son—that is, His virgin-born Son of God—that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. 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."

I go back to our question: Why couldn't God just forgive us? Why did Jesus have to die? Not only for revelation, but redemption. Now, listen carefully. Our father Adam sinned. And when he sinned, he dragged the entire human race down with him. We're all descendants of Adam, and the Bible says, "In Adam, all die." Our relationship, our standing with God, our dominion with God was lost by Adam, who sold it out to the devil. Adam became a slave of Satan, and the son of a slave is a slave himself, and we were born into this world, the sons, the daughters of Adam, and in Adam all die. And so, the weight, the burden of sin is upon us. You say, "Now, wait a minute. I didn't vote for Adam. What Adam did has nothing to do with what happened to me." I hope you don't believe that. If Adam had died without children, where would you be? You're connected to Adam, whether you understand it, or like it, or not. Friend, we're all connected to Adam and we receive of Adam the sinful nature of Adam. Sometimes people say, "We're made in the image of God." No, it was Adam in the image of God. But that image was marred and defaced, and the Bible says, then Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and in his image. We are in the image of Adam, not the image of God. By nature, we're in the image of Adam. You see, you think you're in the image of God? Look around. You think God's in this shape? We are in the image of Adam, and in Adam all die. Now, Adam forfeited the whole thing. Now, it was lost by a man, and, according to God's law of sovereign justice, it must be redeemed by a man. God could not just step in and say, "I forgive." If He could have, He would have. Now, listen carefully. If there were some way for us to be saved apart from Calvary, I lose respect

for Almighty God. What kind of a God would allow His darling Son to be abused, misused, spat upon, beaten, lacerated, crucified, when there was some other way? What kind of a God would have allowed that? I'd hate to meet that God in a dark alley. No, friend, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.

Why the virgin birth? Jesus could not have been a son of Adam. Had He been a son of Adam, Adam's sinful blood would have been in His veins. He would have been a slave to Satan, just like every other son of Adam was a slave. He had to be the Son of God. Therefore, He is not born of Adam. He is born of a virgin, sired by the Holy Spirit of God. He had to do that to be sinless, but He had to be a man to pay the sin debt, for without shedding of blood is no remission of sin. Therefore, He had to be the God-man. Now, listen very carefully. 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. A sinner could die for nobody's else's sin except his own. He had to be sinless to be a substitute. He came as He did, to be what He was, to do what He did, that we might be what we are, sons and daughters of God. He came to earth that we might go to heaven. He was born of a virgin that we might be born again. That's the incarnation. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." It is redemption. Thank God for the virgin birth. Don't think it's incidental. Don't think it's mythological. Friend, it is the foundation stone of our faith that God became man. This is the incarnation. Second Adam from above, reinstate us in thy love.

A ministry of revelation, a ministry of redemption, and a ministry of restoration. He brought back for us what the first Adam lost. Now, you see, as a matter of fact, He brought back more, more than Adam ever lost. Listen to me. When Adam was in the Garden of Eden, he was merely innocent until he sinned. You are more than innocent; you are righteous when you trust the Lord Jesus Christ. God imparts to you the righteousness of Christ. Friend, when you understand it all, it will make you want to shout. I had rather be a saved sinner than Adam innocent before he ever sinned. We have more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam, in the second Adam. Second Adam from above, reinstate us in thy love: that's what the carol says. Why? What is the efficiency of the virgin birth? A ministry of revelation, a ministry of redemption, a ministry of restoration.

III. The Sufficiency of the New Birth

Now, here's the third and final thing. I want you to see not only the deficiency of the natural birth, and the efficiency of the virgin birth, but I want you to see, therefore, the

sufficiency of the new birth. Now, Jesus is saying to this man, “You must be born again.” Look in verses 4 through 7: “Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he’s old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit—underscore that—he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee—here it is—Ye must be born again.” It’s clear now why Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, one birth for you is not enough.”

Now, I say again I’m glad that He used a birth to illustrate salvation because that’s something we can all understand. For example, in a birth there must be a conception. There must be two parents for you to be born. Now, look in verse 5: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Now, who are our parents in the new birth? Water and the Spirit. Well, you say, “Pastor, I understand the Spirit. That’s the Holy Spirit. But what about the water? What does that stand for?” Water in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is an emblem, a symbol, of the Word of God. The Bible speaks in Ephesians chapter 5 of the “washing of water by the word.” God says of His Word, “Is not my word like the rain that cometh down from heaven?” The Word of God is one parent in the new birth. “Pastor, are you sure of that?” Yes. Peter explains it to us in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 23: “Being born again...—that’s the same subject now—being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” The Word of God is the seed that impregnates. That’s the reason it takes the preaching of the Word of God to get people saved. That’s one parent, the Word of God. And then, the Spirit of God. Now, you take the Word of God and the Spirit of God, if we preach the Word of God and the Spirit is not here to enlighten and to fructify, then it doesn’t happen. But if we depend upon the Spirit of God, but we don’t give the truth of God, the Holy Spirit of God is helpless to conceive the new man. But when the Word of God and the Spirit of God come together, that is a conception, our two parents that bring about the new birth. Where does it take place? In the womb of faith—in the womb of faith. You take the Word of God and the Spirit of God—the gestation takes place in the womb of faith when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. Now, you need to understand this.

Friend, when parents conceive a child, they don’t create life; they transmit life. The life of the parents now goes into the child. When you’re saved, when you’re born again, God does not create life in you; He transfers life to you. The life of God comes into you. Now, learn this about salvation. Salvation is not getting man out of earth into heaven. That’s the by-product of salvation. Thank God, I’m going to heaven. I’m not taking away

from heaven. That's wonderful. But salvation is not primarily getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man. That's the reason Jesus said, in John 10:10, "I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly." You see, that life comes from God above, just as the life of your parents is in you. And so, this life is transferred.

Now, not only is there a conception, but here's the second thing. Here's another trait of the twice-born. In a conception and in a birth, a character is produced—a character is produced. Now, I am a character. You can say, "You can say that again, Pastor." Well, I'm a character. And so are you. And what makes my characteristics naturally? Well, if you knew my father and my mother, you'd understand. I am the sum total of the characteristics of my parents. There's nothing in me that was not in my parents, and all that was in my parents is in me, because their character, their characteristics, their natural traits, are in me by my natural birth. Now, when you are born again, you get a new character. The character of God is reproduced in you. The Bible tells us in 2 Peter 1, verse 4, we become partakers of the divine nature. I have my human nature—I'm a Rogers. By my divine nature I have the nature of God in me. Now, some people have the idea that you can just take a child, and begin to train that child, and nurture that child into becoming a Christian, and just sort of we ooze into being a Christian. No, no. Nobody is half-saved. To be half-saved is to be altogether lost.

Listen carefully. I've used this analogy before. A Christian is not like a tadpole who finally matures and becomes a frog. A Christian is more like a frog who has become a prince by the kiss of grace. It is something supernatural. Not only are we nicer people; we are new creatures. And when we're new creatures, we receive the characteristics of our father. We receive the nature of our father.

May I mention four things that are true about you if you have been saved, traits of the twice-born?

Number one: You're going to have a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, you're a partaker of the divine nature. The characteristic of the heavenly Father is going to be in you. May I ask you a question? What does the heavenly Father think of His Son? He said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Why do you call yourself a Christian if you don't love Jesus? You say, "I believe in Him." That's not the point. Do you love Him? I love the Lord Jesus. Not romantically. I love Him. I love Jesus Christ. Do you love Him? If not, you ought to wonder, do you have divine nature in you? You see, there's a characteristic that is transmitted when the life of God comes into you.

Not only is there going to be a love for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word that's going to be in you, but I'll tell you another sign. You're going to have the witness of the Spirit. If you are born of the Spirit, that means the Spirit of God is in you. And the Spirit

of God is going to witness to you that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, the Bible says in Romans chapter 8, verse 16: “The Spirit himself beareth witness that with our spirit, that we are the children of God”—that is, born into God’s family. “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Do you have the witness of the Spirit in your heart that you belong to Jesus Christ? I say, do you? I didn’t ask you, are you a church member? I didn’t ask if you’re baptized. I don’t ask if you tithe. Does the Holy Spirit of God whisper to you that you belong to Jesus Christ? Now, I’m not talking about emotion. I’m not opposed to emotion. Emotion is fine. It’s a gift of God. But the witness of the Spirit is not an emotional feeling. It’s not getting wet around the lashes and warm around the heart, and getting shivers and goose bumps, seeing visions and icicles up and down your spine. What is the witness of the Spirit? It is not necessarily emotion. Now, remember your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature; salvation is the deepest work of God. I see a lot of these real emotional people, but they don’t have the awareness of God. Down deep they’re real shallow. What is the witness of the Spirit? It is awareness—awareness; not emotion, awareness. I have an awareness that I belong to God. You say, “Explain it to me.” I can’t explain it, but if you have it, you know what I’m talking about. You see, “He that hath the Spirit hath the witness in himself. God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we’re children of God.” There will be a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be the witness of the Spirit.

I’ll tell you what else there will be if you’ve been saved. There will be a desire for holiness, because you’re going to have the nature of God and God is holy. Do you have a desire for holiness? Has there come in your heart and in your life a hatred for sin, a desire to be righteous and to be holy? If not, why do you call yourself a child of God? Because God is holy and His nature is to be in you. I’m not saying that you’re to be sinless. We won’t be sinless until we’re taken to heaven in the Rapture. But there’s a difference in my heart now after I’ve been saved. Before I was saved I was running to sin; now I’m running from it. People say, “Oh, if I believe in eternal security, I’d just get saved and sin all I want to.” Well, I sin all I want to. I sin more than I want to. I don’t want to. I do slip and fall and sin, but the desire of my heart is to live a holy life. That is the desire of my heart. That’s one of the ways I know that I’m saved.

I’ll tell you another trait of the twice-born, and that is a desire to share Jesus Christ. Can you convince me that you’re saved and you have no desire to tell others about it? You have no desire for your brothers in the family, your sister, your father, your mother, your friends, your neighbors to know the Jesus that you know? If you knew the cure for cancer, would you share it? If you knew the answer to war, would you tell it? Friend, when you know what you say that you know, you want to share it. From the moment I

gave my heart to Jesus Christ to this moment, there has been a desire in my heart to share Jesus Christ. And if you don't have that desire, perhaps you ought to put a question mark after that thing you call salvation. I've said it before, if you can't give it away, maybe you ought to give it up.

Now, look. When you're saved, number one, a conception takes place. Number two: When a conception takes place, a character is formed. Number three: when a birth takes place, there is a finality—a finality. You're only born once in either realm. In the physical realm you can only have one birth. In the spiritual realm you can only have one birth. You don't keep getting born physically. You don't keep getting saved spiritually. Once you're born, you're born. Nobody can be unborn. And my parents could not take me back to the hospital and say, "We don't like this one. Take him back." No, listen. A birth is a finality. I hear people talk about getting saved over and over and over again. I want to give you a challenge. You show me anywhere in the Bible, anywhere, where anybody was ever saved twice. You can't do it. If you think you can, you come up here next Sunday. I'll give you a place on this platform. You go see Brother Mark and say, "Mark, he made a challenge and I'm here to stand up and make a fool out of him. I want to show you where somebody was born twice spiritually." You're not going to find it. You can't find it, friend, any more than you could go out in this world and find somebody who was born twice physically. You see, with a birth there is a finality. Jesus said, "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." When a baby is born here on this earth, down at the courthouse his name is recorded. Jesus said, "Don't rejoice that the demons are subject to you, but rejoice, rather, that your name is written in heaven." And the Greek word there means your name stands written. Some people think, "Well, I'm saved today; I'm lost tomorrow; I'm saved today." Here's the recording angel. He writes your name in, erases it, writes it in, erases it, writes it in, erases it. No, no, no, no, no. A birth is a finality.

Now, there's a difference between relationship and fellowship. I am a Rogers. I was born. That's a finality. I'll be through all eternity. Fellowship sometimes was different. My dad had to carry me to the woodshed.

Now, number four: A birth is a fresh start. You see, a newborn baby is all tomorrows; he's no yesterdays. You'll never find a policeman standing ready to arrest a newborn child for crimes he's done. And when you're born again, your sins are in the grave of God's forgetfulness. You are brand new. Suppose you've been a prostitute? You get saved, you become an arch virgin in the sight of Jesus Christ. Now, it's not to say there'll not be some repercussions of your sin in the physical realm, but I'm talking about in the eyes of God. God says, "What I've called clean, let no man call unclean. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like

crimson, they shall be as wool." Every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish is washed whiter than snow in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. When you come to Jesus, hallelujah, you get a brand new start. You're born again with a fresh start. How far has He removed your sin from you? As far as the East is from the West. He didn't say as far as the North is from the South. You can measure from the North Pole to the South Pole. There is no East Pole and West Pole. When you start going east, you just keep on going. You start going west you just keep on going—infinity. That's how far He has removed our sins from us.

Six: When you are born, then a growth process begins. A birth is the beginning of the growth cycle. You see, folks, God doesn't demand that we be full-grown before we get born. We come just as we are. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." Some of you are waiting. You say, "Pastor Rogers, I've just got things I've got to get straightened out. I need to learn the Bible a little more, and I need to overcome this habit, and I need to learn this, and then I'm going to give my heart to Jesus." What you're saying is, "I'm going to grow up and then get born." You can't do it. You can't really begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ until you give your heart to Christ. Until a conception begins and a growth begins, you can't do it. Don't try to grow up and then get born. Come just as you are. You say, "Well, there are things I don't have figured out yet." You'll wake up in hell and you still won't have them figured out. Can you believe this—Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so? Can you believe this—that Christ died for your sins? Can you believe this—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved? Start there, and then you can grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Next: In a birth you get a family and a Father. Now, some of you may not know who your earthly father is, but you have a heavenly Father. Have you ever thought about your responsibility to your Father? Think about His responsibility to you. Did you know that when you come to Him, He becomes your Father and He will watch over you? David said, "Once I was young and now I'm old, and yet I've not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things you have need of." You get a Father. And not only do you get a Father, you get a fortune. We're heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And not only a Father and a fortune, you get a family. Now, you may be an only child physically, but now, look at your family—look at your family—brothers and sisters all over the world when you're born into the greatest family of ever; that is, the family of God.

And last of all, a birth is a certain event. It brings a certainty to it. You ought to be

able to say, “I know I’ve been saved.” I ask people, “Have you been born again?” They’ll say, “Well, I hope so, I think so, maybe so. I’m trying. I’m doing the best I can.” Well, if I were to ask you physically, “Have you ever been born, period? you say, “Well, I think so, I hope so, maybe so. I’m doing the best I can,” I’d say, “You don’t know what I’m talking about.” I mean, look. If you have trusted Christ, if you’ve come down on the Word of God, put your faith where God has put your sins, and somebody says, “Are you saved?” you can say, “Yes, hallelujah, praise God, I know I’m saved. God’s Spirit agrees with my spirit that I’m a child of God.”

I’m told that Will Rogers—I tell this in my Discovery Class—that Will Rogers, the cowboy philosopher and humorist from Oklahoma, was asked. He wanted to get a passport, and he went into the office for the passport, and they said, “Well, we’ll need your birth certificate.” He said, “What for?” They said, “Well, proof of your birth.” He said, “Well, I’m here, ain’t I?” Friend, I’m here, and I’ve been born again. I know it. I’m not boasting in myself. I’m giving praise to the grace of God. I’ve got a lot of growing to do. I’m in the family, though. I have been saved. I’ve been born again.

Conclusion

Now, think about it: the deficiency of the natural birth, the efficiency of the virgin birth, the sufficiency of the new birth. That’s what Christmas is all about. That is God in human flesh.

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, if you’re not saved, I want to lead you in a prayer. And in this prayer I’m going to invite you to pray. I’m going to ask that no one stir, no one leave the auditorium during the invitation, during this period of time, unless it is an absolute emergency. Be in a spirit of prayer. And begin to pray for those precious souls round about you who may not know. Now, remember, their eyes have to be open. I believe God has taken the Word of God that I’ve preached today to open eyes. Pray that God will open their eyes. Pray that they’ll not be willfully blind, that they will not hate the light, but that they will come to the light. And, friend, if you need Jesus, pray this way: Dear God—speak to Him out of your heart—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. I believe you’re the Son of God. I believe You paid my sin debt with your blood on the cross. I believe that the Father raised You from the dead. And now by faith I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior, and I yield my life to You.

Understanding the New Birth

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 19, 2000

Main Scripture Text: John 3:1–7

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Introduction

A few weeks ago, I was in Argentina, preaching, and I preached in a crusade in the city called Mendoza, and another, San Juan, and God poured out His blessings in a wonderful way, and we saw multitudes come to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I preached on understanding the new birth. And, as I was preaching there in South America, I said to myself, “I need to preach this same message right in the United States, and around the world, where Love Worth Finding ministers.

So I want you to find the classic passage on the new birth, and turn, if you will, please, to John chapter 3, and we’re going to read together the first seven verses. But let me say, as we’re talking about the new birth, and born-again Christians, to say born-again Christian is really redundant. You don’t have to put the description “born-again” in front of a Christian. If he is a Christian, he is born again. Amen? To say born-again Christian would be like saying tooth dentist. Or it would be like saying female woman. If you are a Christian, you’re born again. If you’re not born again, you’re not a Christian, no matter what denomination you may be a member of.

Now, let me read the Scripture to you: “There was man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi,—the word Rabbi means teacher—we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be

born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

This is a divine imperative. Jesus says that you must be born again. Now, why must a person be born again? First of all, because of man’s undeniable sinfulness. Now, you may not think you’re a sinner, but I want to remind you to whom Jesus was speaking. The man’s name was Nicodemus. His very name means superior. Also, he was a Jew. He was of the chosen race. Besides that, he was a ruler of the Jews. That is, he was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was one of only 71 in all the nation of Israel. It would be like being a member of the Supreme Court. He was among the most religious of the religious. He was among the most moral of the moral. And Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, you must be born again.”

And I want to say to any religious person here today, and any moral person here today, if you think you can go to heaven without being born again, you’re grossly ignorant of two things: number one, you don’t know how sinful you are; number two, you don’t know how holy God is. Because of man’s undeniable sinfulness, man must be born again.

And, also, because of man’s unsatisfied longings. There’s something in you that will never be satisfied until you are born again. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night. There was a void, an emptiness, in his heart. He had to talk to Jesus. He had been seeing Jesus do miracles. He wanted to know. There was something about Jesus that intrigued him. There was a hunger in his heart, a dissatisfaction, and so he came to Jesus by night.

Now, theologians have raced their motors to try to figure out why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Some say because he was ashamed to come in the daytime, or a fear of persecution. Now, I just believe that he came to Jesus by night because he couldn’t sleep. And, as one wise man said, “Rather than counting sheep, he just decided he would talk to the Shepherd.”

He went to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he asked Jesus, “Lord, I want to understand miracles. Rabbi...”—he called Him Rabbi—“Master, Teacher, no one can do these miracles that you are doing except God be with Him.” And Jesus just turned the thing back to him, and said, in effect, “Nicodemus, if you want to understand miracles, you’re going to have to become a miracle. You must be born again.”

Man has a longing in his heart that will never be satisfied without the new birth. I want to say again, no matter how much money you have, how much pleasure you enjoy, how much fame is spread abroad concerning you, if you are not born again, there

is a part of you that is missing and will never, ever, ever be satisfied apart from the new birth.

I'll tell you another reason that you must be born again: because of your unending existence. Your soul will be in existence somewhere when the sun, the moon, and the stars have grown cold. You're going to live forever. After death, there is another life, either in heaven for those who've been born again, in hell for those who've not been born again. And, if you've not been born twice, you'll die twice. The second death is the lake of fire.

You say, "Pastor, don't talk to me about death. I am healthy." You are nearer death than you've ever been. Sure, one time you were in an automobile accident, and you said, "I was very close to death." No, you weren't, because you didn't die. You're closer to death now than you've ever been. You're nearer to the time now, at this moment, when you're going to die, than you've ever been since you've been on the face of this earth. You will die, and you will exist somewhere, and, without the new birth, you will exist forever in hell.

Now, I'm so glad that Jesus, the Master Teacher, used this phrase "born again." Why? Because a birth is something we've all experienced. Did anybody get here any other way except being born physically? Of course not. We have all had a physical birth. So, therefore, we can take a physical birth, and we can make a correlation, and we can understand that the spiritual birth, in many ways, parallels a physical birth. So I want to give you six ways—six ways—that being born again spiritually is like being born physically. Our Lord wants us to understand. And so, let's look at these six ways.

I. A Conception Takes Place

Number one: In a birth, a conception takes place. You cannot have a birth without a conception. Now, when you were born physically, you had two parents. You had a mother and a father. The mother supplied the egg. The father supplied the sperm. And when the egg and the sperm came together in your mother's womb, there was a conception, and you began to be.

Now, it takes two parents for birth. What are the two parents in the spiritual birth? The two parents in the spiritual birth are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Look, if you will, in verse 5 of this chapter—look at it: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Those are the two parents—water and the Spirit. Now, what does water stand for? Water stands for the Word of God. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament, water is an emblem, a symbol, of the Word of God. The Bible speaks of the washing of water by the Word.

Now, we know it's the Word of God that is referred to here because of 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 23—put that in the margin of your Bible: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed—the word seed means sperm, not of corruptible sperm—but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” So, the father, as it were, in your spiritual birth, is the Word of God.

Now, what is the mother? The mother is the Spirit of God. You are born of water and of the Spirit. When the Word of God and the Spirit of God come together, then a conception takes place. That is the reason, before I came out here to pray, to preach, I got on my knees and prayed for the anointing of the Spirit, because I want the Holy Spirit to be here today. That is the reason that, when I preach, I use the Word of God, because it takes the Spirit and God and the Word of God for a conception. But there's another thing that is needed, if you would be born again.

There is the Word, and there is the Spirit, but where is the womb? Where is the womb? The womb is the womb of faith—faith. You supply the womb. That is faith. He's going to tell us, in verse 16, in a moment, that, when we believe, we'll have everlasting life. And so, when the Word of God and the Spirit of God come together in the womb of faith, there is a conception, and a new birth takes place.

II. A Continuity Is Involved

Secondly, not only in a new birth is there conception, but, number two, in a birth, continuity is involved. Parents don't manufacture babies. What parents do is just transmit life from themselves to the child. I have in me the life of my father, Arden Rogers, and the life of my mother, Rose Rogers. Now, Arden and Rose came together, I was conceived, and now I share their life. Their life continues in me. Now, when you are born again, the life of God comes into you. You are a part of the life of God. God comes into you. God's life is put into you.

You see, folks, salvation is not simply getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man. It is the life of God that comes into you. The theme of the Gospel of John is life. Now, by your first birth, you have existence. By your second birth, you have supernatural life. In the Gospel of John, the word life is used some 36 times. And, you know, Jesus said, in John 10, verse 10, “I have come that you might have life...” And so, understand this: that, when you are born again, you are a partaker of God's life, a partaker of the divine nature. The life of God is in you.

Now, I have the life of A. D. and Rose Rogers in me. If you were to meet my parents, they're both in heaven now, but you would understand me a whole lot more, because I'm a part of them. Now, I also, by my second birth, I have the life of God in me. God is in me by my second birth, because there has been a conception; and now there is a

continuity, this new life that is in me.

III. A Character Is Produced

Now, here's a third thing about a birth that I want you to understand: In a birth, character is produced—character is produced. Look, if you will, in verse 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Now, when you were born of the flesh, you became flesh, and you had the nature of your first parents. Now, don't think I'm disrespectful, but I want to say my first parents were sinners. My mother, Rose Rogers, sweet as she was, infectious sense of humor, she was a sinner. And my father, honorable, decent man that he was, he was a sinner. How did he become a sinner? Well, he accepted, he received, the nature from his father. And how did he become a sinner? Well, he had a nature from his father. And it goes all the way back to Adam, and the Bible says, "In Adam, all die." We're all sinners by nature. Say amen. Don't look so holy. The Bible says we are, by nature, the children of wrath. Now, we receive the character of our earthly parents by our earthly birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh..."

Now, we receive the character of God by our new birth. A character is involved. A character is produced. We become partakers of the divine nature. Let me give you a scripture—2 Peter 1, verse 3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..."—partakers of the divine nature. I have the nature of A. D. and Rose Rogers in me by my first birth, but I have the nature of Almighty God in me by my second birth. Now, you must understand this. Jesus said you have to be born again. You have to have a brand new start. Christians are not just nicer people; they are new creatures—they are new creatures. You are brand new.

I've often used this illustration. A Christian is not like a tadpole that's finally developed into a frog, just a continuation of the same first birth. A Christian is more like a frog that has been transformed into a prince by the kiss of grace. It is a supernatural, wonderful thing.

Now, a character is produced. Has there been a change in your character, or did you just simply join the church and get baptized? Listen to me carefully. If your religion has not changed your life, you'd better change your religion. The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation.

Now, what are the traits of the twice-born? What is the character? What are characteristics, the nature? Remember, when you are born from above—and, literally,

that's what the Greek says, when it says born again; it literally says being born from above—when you are born from above, God's nature comes into you. Well, what is the nature of God? You want to know whether you're saved or not? Now, I know that I'm a Rogers. I can look at my parents and I can see their nature in me. I know that I've born again, because I can open the Bible and see God, and I can look in my heart and see the nature of God in me. What are the traits of the twice-born? What is the character that is produced? What will be in you if you're really be born again? May I mention four of them.

First of all, there will be a love for Jesus Christ. Now, if you don't love Jesus, you'd better put a big question mark after this thing you call salvation. There will be a love for Jesus Christ. Not a mere intellectual belief—a love for Jesus Christ. What did God the Father say of His Son? "This is my beloved Son..." Does God the Father love His Son? You'd better believe it. Is God's nature in you, if you've been born again? It is? Then, as night follows day, you will love what God loves, and He loves His Son. And, if you do not have a genuine love for Jesus Christ, you ought to ask yourself, "Do I have the nature of God in me?" No, there will be a love for Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you something else that'll be in your heart, if you've been twice-born, another trait of the twice-born. There will be a desire for holiness. God the Father says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And He says, "I'm a Father unto you." That is, "If you're my child, like Father, like Son." You are going to be holy. You're going to desire for true holiness.

Now, that doesn't mean that you can never sin, because you're not God. You still have that old nature you got from your parents, like I have the nature from my parents and I passed on to my children, but let me give you a key verse here—1 John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God—notice, he's talking about the birth now—does not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him..." What is his seed? His nature, the sperm of God, that came into you, through the Word of God. You do not commit sin. It doesn't mean you can never, ever sin, but the Greek word here means that you cannot habitually practice sin. If sin is your lifestyle, if there's not been a change in your life, if you've not learned to hate sin as well as love the Lord Jesus Christ, how can you say that you've been born again? How can you say that you have the nature of God in you? Are you a partaker of the divine nature? Well, what is the nature of God? God is holy—God is holy.

I'll tell you a third mark of a person who's been born again. Not only does he love the Lord Jesus Christ, not only does he have a hatred, an antithesis, toward sin, but, thirdly, he has the inner witness of the Spirit. The Bible says "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself." The Bible says that God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Why do I say he has the witness of the Spirit? Because that

which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. God is spirit. When you get saved, the Holy Spirit of God comes into you; the life of God is there.

Now, what is the witness of the Spirit in you? It is not an emotional feeling. I'm not opposed to emotions. I enjoy emotions. Very frankly, I am not really a very emotional person. I don't get real high; I don't get real low. I stay in a narrow band. That is not supernatural—that's just natural. That's the way I am. I stay here. I don't go up and down. Some of you are all over the lot. I just kind of stay right in here. That doesn't make me any better; it doesn't make me any worse. Some people are just more emotional by nature.

One man said, "Bless God, I know I'm saved, because, when I got saved, I was out plowing corn. I got so happy I tore up a half an acre of corn." Well, that's all right; kind of hard on the corn, but that's all right. That doesn't make you any more saved than a little 12-year-old child who will come down this aisle this morning, sweetly and quietly give his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of emotions. I've told you before that your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part. Now, I'm not opposed to emotions, but if you depend upon emotions for the assurance of your salvation, the assurance of your salvation is going to go up and down with the condition of your liver.

What I'm trying to say is this—listen to me now: There is the witness of the Spirit. What is the witness of the Spirit? It is very hard to explain, but easy to experience. It is that inner consciousness that you belong to Jesus. You know. You know, because you know, because you know. It is God's Spirit saying to you, "I am in you. I live in you." "Hereby do we know that we know Him, because He has given to us of His Spirit."

Now, I want to mention a next trait of the twice-born and see if this is in you. There will be a desire to share the Lord Jesus Christ. You will want people to know Jesus. What is the burning desire of God the Father? "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him." God wants you to hear the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants the whole world to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there a desire in your heart to share Jesus Christ? I can tell you, from the moment I gave my heart to Christ as a teen to this very moment, there has been a burning desire in my heart to share Jesus Christ with other people. That's what motivates me to preach this message this morning.

Now, if you have been saved, if you've been born again, a character is produced—a character is produced. That character is the divine nature. God Himself will be in you, and, if you don't have these characteristics, why do you say that the nature of God is in you?

IV. A Completion Transpires

Number four—here's another reason that Jesus used a birth: In a birth, a completion transpires. Now, what do I mean by that? A birth is a once-for-all experience. In the natural realm, you are born one time. In the spiritual realm, the second birth, that's a once-in-a-lifetime experience. No baby is ever born twice physically. That's the reason Nicodemus asked Jesus this question. He said, "Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" That's impossible. There are no reverse gears in life. You can't go back in your mother's womb and be born again, be born the second time. Now, in the physical realm, the birth takes place one time. In the spiritual realm, the birth takes place one time. Friend, when you are born physically, you are born forever. I was born physically. The Adrian that's standing on this platform can never, ever, ever, ever cease to exist. My spirit will be somewhere, either in heaven or hell. Friend, I'm going to heaven. I've already made reservations. I am going to heaven. But that which was born in West Palm Beach, Florida—that which was born in West Palm Beach, Florida—will go on and on and on and on. Now, that's a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The spiritual birth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. You know, there are some people who think you can get saved and then lost, and then saved and then lost, and then saved and then lost. Can you imagine what a difficulty the recording angel would have, writing your name in, erasing it, writing it in, erasing it. No, Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are written in the book of life." And the Greek word there—your name stands written in the book of life.

Now, that's the reason I believe in the eternal security of the believer. I am a Rogers. I am a Rogers because of birth. I can never be unborn. I may have disappointed my parents; I'm sure I did. There's a difference, however, between relationship and fellowship. Relationship is established by birth; fellowship is maintained by life. There were times when fellowship between me and my father was broken. My father had to chastise me, but there was no way that he could take back the fact that he had fathered me. I'm his. For all eternity, I am a Rogers.

When you get born again, you become a partaker of the divine nature. He will never, ever, ever forsake you. You will always be a child of God, if you've ever been twice born. I'm not just talking about being religious, being baptized, being a nice person. If you don't believe that, you show me anywhere in the Bible where anybody was saved twice, I'll give you \$5,000. If that's not enough, I'll make it 10. All you have to do is just come show me where anybody was saved twice. You can't find that in the Bible.

Friend, a birth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience in either realm—in the physical realm, or in the spiritual realm. A person can only be born spiritually one time. It is a completion, and we need to understand this.

V. A Commencement Occurs

Now, the next thing, number five: In a birth, a commencement occurs. While there is completion, the birth is finished, but now the growth begins. A commencement occurs. A birth is a starting place. And so, no matter what your past has been by the old birth, if you have a new birth, glory to God, you get a brand new start. Say amen. You get a brand new start.

One thing you will never see is a policeman ready to arrest a newborn child for a crime he's done, because that newborn child is no yesterdays; he's all tomorrows. And, when you come to Jesus Christ, when you get saved, all of your past, all of your yesterdays, are buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

The Bible says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." He didn't say, as far as the north is from the south. There's a north pole and a south pole, but there's no east pole and west pole. You start east—you just keep on going. You start west—you just keep on going. You go this way—east is always east. If you go that way, west is always west. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." He has buried them in the deepest sea. He's cast them behind His back. If God takes my sins and puts them behind His back, then He turns around to see them, where are they? Still behind His back.

Friend, I want to tell you that, when you become a child of God, you are all tomorrows. You're no yesterday. Here's a great scripture for you—1 Corinthians chapter 6, beginning in verse 9: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Listen to this. Be not deceived: neither fornicators—that's those whose lifestyle is sex outside of marriage—nor idolaters—that's those who love, worship, fear, or serve anything more than God—nor adulterers—that's those who do not keep their marriage vows—nor effeminate—that's those who are practicing sexual perversion—nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Now, that's black print on white paper. If this is your lifestyle, you need to get saved.

But now, notice verse 11: "And such were some..."—not are, were—"...but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ..." Washed means that the stain, the blemish, is gone. Sanctified means that you've been set aside, clean and holy for God. Justified means that it's as if you were never, ever impure to begin with. There may be someone here this morning who has practiced, is practicing, prostitution. I want to tell you, God loves you—God loves you. If a prostitute gets on her knees—a prostitute—and says, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart; forgive my sin; I need You; I want to be saved," and she's born again, she gets up off of her knees

an arch virgin. You may not believe that, but, friend, that's "such were some of you," not are some of you—"were some of you." She is a brand new person. When people understand this, then they begin to write songs like Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Some people say, "Well, I never did that. I'm better than that person." You may be worse, if you don't get saved. Jesus said, the publicans and the harlots are going to enter into the kingdom before some of the Sadducees and Pharisees of His day. Now, I'm telling you, in a birth, a commencement occurs. You began to grow. When you're born again, you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, I've been growing now for a long time, and I'm still growing. I'm not a full grown Christian, but the Bible says, in Philippians 1:6: "he who hath begun a good work in you—that's the God who fathered me—will perform it." He is my heavenly Father.

A baby must grow. If you give your heart to Jesus today, you're not going to sprout wings and get a halo. You may be 40, 50, 60 years of age, but, spiritually, you're going to have to learn how to walk and talk and dress and work and feed yourself. You're going to have to grow. You'll be a brand new baby. Now, there are some people here who are saying, "You know, I've got some things in my life, and, when I get them all worked out, I'm going to give my heart to Jesus Christ." That's backward. That's like trying to grow up, and then get born. No. You get born; you give your heart to Jesus. Yes, you'll stumble. Yes, you're going to have some trouble with your old vocabulary. Yes, there are going to be some hangover things. Yes, you're going to spill the Cheerios. Yes, you're going to make some mistakes. Yes, you're going to fall, trying to learn how to walk, but you will be in the family. You start. It is a commencement, and it is a walk. It goes on and on and on, as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

VI. A Certainty Is Expected

Now, let me give the last mark. In a birth, a certainty is expected. I mean, a birth is a certain event. Suppose I were to ask you about your first birth, and I asked you this question: "Have you ever been born?" That would be a dumb question. "Did your mother ever have any children?" "Have you ever been born?" Dumb question. Suppose you gave a dumber answer. You were to say, "Well, I think so; I hope so; I'm doing the best I can." Ask the average person, are you saved—are you born again? "I hope so. I think so. I'm doing the best I can." I would say they have a faulty understanding of what the new birth is.

Now, a new birth is a certainty. You ought to be able to say, "I know that I have been born again." Will Rogers—no relation to me, but that humorous and philosopher from

Oklahoma in another time—went to get a passport. When he went to get his passport, they asked him for his birth certificate. He said, “Well, why do you want my birth certificate?” They said, “For proof of your birth” He said, “Well, I’m here, ain’t I?”

Let me tell you something. That, my friend, is proof of your birth. That’s better than a birth certificate. A birth certificate can be forged. Listen to me very carefully. Some people think that they have to remember the time and the place when they were saved in order to know that they’re saved, to have a definite experience. No. If you remember the time and the place, I’m happy for you, but that doesn’t make you any more certain of your salvation, if you understand the Bible and what I’m about to tell you.

I’ve often used this illustration. I tell our new Christians this. Suppose you and I are going to go to the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. I drive, and you fly. Now, I say, “I’ll meet you at the airport.” And you’re there at the airport waiting on me when I get there. Now, when I drive the automobile and I cross the state line, it’s very obvious I’m now entering, first of all, into Arkansas, then into Texas, whichever way you go. I drive. You’re now entering the State of Texas. Now, you fly. You don’t know when you’ve crossed the state line. You’re up too high. You just don’t know. But you land there in the airport, and it’s obviously the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. You get out. Now, which one is the most in the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport: the one who drives the car, or the one who flies in the airplane? The one who knows exactly when he crossed the state line, or the one who doesn’t know exactly? Now, listen to me very carefully, because this will help you. Don’t you let anybody ever tell you, if you can’t tell me the time and the place you were saved, you’re not saved. There’s one thing wrong with that. It is not in the Bible—not in the Bible.

What is the proof that I crossed the state line in an airplane? The proof is I am in the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. And if I am, I had to cross the line. Got it? Say got it.

Okay now, listen. What is the proof that you are born again? What is the proof that this man is born again? Not something that happened in the past, but that he now is trusting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. If he is now trusting Christ, I don’t care when it happened, how it happened. If he is trusting Christ now, he did somewhere, somehow, right? The Bible never puts the assurance of your salvation in the past. It never says, he that believed has everlasting life. It says “He that believes...” Question: Are you now trusting Jesus? If you are, friend, you’re in the airport. I don’t care whether you came by car or plane. If you’re trusting Jesus, you had to trust Him sometime, if you’re trusting Him now. So don’t go looking back to some murky experience, trying to say, “Oh, I just don’t remember. Mama, tell me, did I do this, did I do that?” No. Just ask yourself, “Am I trusting Jesus Christ? Is He my Lord and Savior? Do I see the traits of the twice-born in my heart and in my life?”

Conclusion

There was a man named George Whitefield. He was a great preacher. He would often preach, you must be born again.” They said to him, “Mr. Whitefield, why do you always preach, you must be born again?” “Well,” he said, “that’s easy, because you must be born again.” Friend, it is none other than Jesus who said, “You must be born again.” And, if you’re only born once, you’ll die twice. The second death is the lake of fire. But, if you’re born twice, that which is born from above will go endless, dateless, timeless, measureless with the Lord.

Remember, there are two parents: the Word of God—I’ve preached it; the Spirit of God—He is here. Will you supply the womb of faith? Jesus summed up this teaching by saying, in verse 16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish...”—that’s the womb of faith—“...whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.”

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And, if you’re already saved, would you begin to pray for those round about you who may not yet be saved? And, if you want to be saved, I’m going to lead you in a prayer today. You can believe in Christ. You will be born again. Remember, it’s not necessarily an emotional experience. You put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray this way: O God, I am a sinner. I’m a sinner, by my first birth, and I have a sinful nature, by my first birth. I need a second birth. I need a new nature. I need to be born from above. Lord Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for making it possible for me to be saved today. I now open my heart. I receive You, by faith, as my personal Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me today, and help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

The Nature of a New Birth

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 3, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 3:1–7, 16

Outline

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Introduction

We are going to begin reading in verse 1 (John chapter 3). If you did not bring a Bible with you, look in the pew racks, and there you will find a Bible. John chapter 3: *“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3:1–7). And then, skip to verse 16: *“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, as I’ve already said, there has been quite a bit of talk about this matter of the new birth today, and so many people are really confused about the matter of a new birth. And, Jesus Christ did not talk to us about the matter of a new birth in order to

confuse us but literally to confirm us and to help us to understand. Jesus was the master teacher, so He talked to us about things that we could understand and how we could become a part of the kingdom of God.

It has been pointed out that there are a number of different kingdoms. The lower kingdom is what we would call “the mineral”; that is, the minerals, the rocks, and things that are placed in mother earth. That’s the lowest stratum; that’s the lowest kingdom. And then, above that is a higher kingdom that we would call “the vegetable kingdom.” These are living things; and so, that makes them higher than minerals. And so, there’s a kingdom above the mineral kingdom, and that’s the vegetable kingdom. But, the vegetable kingdom doesn’t have conscience life. You may talk to your plants, but I really doubt that it does much good. Then, above that is the animal kingdom. Animals have conscious lives; and so, we put the animal kingdom above the vegetable kingdom, which is above the mineral kingdom. But, animals don’t have a spirit like human beings do. Animals are not made in the image of God like human beings are. So, above that is the human kingdom, and we’re all members of the human kingdom. And, that’s pretty high, but there’s another kingdom above it all—and that is referred to here in John, the third chapter, as “*the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5).

Now, the question comes: How can a person move from one kingdom to the other kingdom? It’s very obvious that those in the mineral kingdom cannot—that which is in the mineral kingdom cannot—by its own efforts place itself into the vegetable kingdom. And, vegetables cannot by their own effort place themselves into the animal kingdom, and animals by their effort cannot place themselves into the human kingdom. And, humans, as we’re going to see, cannot by their efforts place themselves into the kingdom of God. But, the mineral kingdom may move into the vegetable kingdom. How? Well, those vegetables put down their roots into the ground and absorb those minerals, and those minerals actually become vegetable. And, the vegetable kingdom may move up into the animal kingdom. How? Because the animal is grazing, or browsing, or feeding—take those green things and bring those things up into the animal kingdom as they feed upon them. And, they turn those vegetables into animal matter. And then, that animal kingdom may be a part of the human kingdom. How? Because we take old Bessie and turn her in to filet mignons, and rump roast, and all of these things; and then, we serve her for Sunday dinner, and she becomes a part of the human kingdom. And, she’s absorbed, and lifted, and brought up into the human kingdom. And, correspondingly, dear friend, we can be brought up into the kingdom of God—not by our own efforts, but God Himself can reach down and bring us up into His kingdom. The Bible calls this “being born again.”

We can’t do it by our own efforts. **I might illustrate, this morning, if I have time, by**

asking a little boy to come up here today, to stand up here and put his hands under his shoes and see if he can lift himself off the floor. Of course he couldn't do it. Now, I can lift him, but he couldn't lift himself off the floor, and no person by his effort can lift himself into the kingdom of God. But, he can be born into that kingdom. Literally, what Jesus said is that we must be born from above. In the Greek language, "to be born again" literally says—if you were to give an exact translation, it would literally say—that "you must be born from above." Now, *what we really need, therefore, is not a boost from beneath, but a birth from above.* You understand? We can't just simply push ourselves into the kingdom of God, but we can be born into the kingdom of God—that God will reach down and bring us into His heavenly kingdom.

And, he will say, "I'm so glad that God used the figure of a birth, because that's something we can all understand." Now, Jesus is talking to us about earthly things. You remember—He told Nicodemus, "If you've read the whole story, if I've told you earthly things, and you don't understand, how shall you understand if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12). A birth is an earthly thing. We all understand the birth.

Now, there are many figures for salvation given in the Bible—and they are all good, but we don't understand them all, necessarily. For example, being saved is like a sheep returning to the fold. Well, if you've never seen a sheep, you might have difficulty with that. Or, being saved is like a leper who has been healed of his leprosy. Well, if you've never had leprosy and never seen a leper healed, you might have difficulty with that. Or, being saved is, for example, like a resurrection. I don't think any of you have had one or seen one. But, being saved is like a resurrection; it's compared to that. But, there is one thing I know about everybody here: we've all been born—we have. Did anybody get here any other way? You were all born; we were all born. And so, there Jesus took something that was absolutely common to human beings—something that we could all understand—and He used that to teach us a great, tremendous spiritual birth. And so, I want us to learn what literally it is to be born again and why did the Lord Jesus Christ call it a "birth."

Now, pay attention. You say, "Well, Pastor, I'm religious." You don't need to tell me that. It was a religious man to whom Jesus Christ was speaking. Jesus Christ was speaking to a man named Nicodemus. Remember what the Bible says: "There was a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus" (John 3:1). Now, you think about that. His earthly name, Nicodemus, means "superior." He was a superior man. He was a Jew. That was the chosen race. He was "*a ruler of the Jews*" (John 3:1). That means that he was one of the Sanhedrin. There were less than eighty people in this Jewish court, and he was one of them—"*a ruler of the Jews*" (John 3:1). And yet, Jesus said to Nicodemus that he had to be born again (John 3:7). A very, very religious man—but Jesus told him,

“Except [he were] born again, he [could not] see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

So, now, whether you’re Baptist, or Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, or Roman, or Catholic, or Jewish, just put all that aside, and I want to ask you this question today: Do you know that you know that you know that you’ve been born again? If not, I want to remind you, that did not say it is optional, that it might be good if you were born again. He said, *“[You] must be born again” (John 3:7)—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).* Now, why did Jesus use the figure of a birth?

I. A Birth Involves a Conception

Well, in the first place, a birth implies a conception. That is, there are things that come together in order to cause a birth. You were conceived in your mother’s womb when that sperm from your father and that egg from your mother came together. There was a conception, and because of that conception, a life began. There were two elements that came together that caused a birth. Now, the same thing is true in the new birth: there are two elements that come together. You read about them in John chapter 3 and verse 5. When Jesus said that which—*“except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).* And so, there are the two elements. Over here is water, and over here is the Spirit and God saying that “You must be born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5).

Now, what does it mean to be born of water? Some people have the mistaken idea that when Jesus said in John chapter 3, verse 5, that you must be born of water (John 3:5) that Jesus was talking about baptism—not at all, not at all. I’ll tell you why. First of all, baptism is not a picture of a birth but of a death. The Bible says, *“Buried with him in baptism... ye are risen... raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).* And, if Jesus talked about that, He’d be mixing a metaphor. And secondly, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Aren’t you a master in Israel, and you don’t know these things?” (John 3:10). That is, “You’ve had all this Old Testament study, and you ought to know this.” Well, baptism is not an Old Testament thing. There’s no reason that Nicodemus should have known about baptism. That’s a New Testament truth. Yet Jesus scolded him for not understanding what He was talking about. Besides that, dear friend, baptism is a work, and we are not saved by works. The Bible says, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5).* And, don’t you ever let anybody tell you that you are born again by being baptized. It is sheer folly to believe that. The Bible says in Romans chapter 10: *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).* And, if you make baptism necessary for salvation, let me tell you what you do: you take that “whosoever” out of the Bible.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. Let's just imagine that today there's a man who is flying in his jet airplane over the Sahara Desert. And, his airplane malfunctions, and it flames out. And, he knows it's going down. And, he pushed the eject button, and the canopy comes open. And, he is catapulted out, and he pulls the ripcord. And, he drifts to the desert floor, and he's there on the burning, broiling desert floor. Nobody knows he's there. For hundreds of miles he has no water, no canteen. He knows, before long, he's going to dehydrate and die. There's not a drop of water anywhere. He remembers what his mother taught him about the Lord Jesus Christ. He remembers the preaching of his pastor who taught the grace of God—how a man could be saved by Christ, who died on the cross to pay for his sins. He's convicted of his sin. He says, "O God, what a fool I've been! I've lived for self and self alone. And now, God, you've brought me to this place. God, at least I thank you that you've given me enough time to think it all through. I believe I'm going to die here, but I don't want to die without knowing you. Now Jesus, you died for me on the cross. You said that, if I would believe on you, that you would save me. You taught, *'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). And God, right now, with all of my heart, as much as in it is, I repent of sin. I open my heart. I receive you, Jesus, now, as my Lord and Savior." And, let's say that he was not just saying that; he was praying that and meaning that. He was literally trusting Christ to save him. He really meant it. Would he be saved? Of course. For the Bible says, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13).

If I make baptism necessary for salvation, that man can't be saved. Number one: There's no water there to baptize him with. Number two: There's no preacher there to baptize him. Number three: He wouldn't be of a certain denomination. Huh? But, dear friend, the moment you make baptism necessary for salvation, you take the "whosoever" out of the Bible, and you have to read it this way: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, and is fortunate enough to be near water, and is fortunate to have a minister, and is fortunate enough to have somebody to baptize him, can be saved." And, at that moment, you're going to eliminate a lot of people, dear friend. I'm everlastingly glad that we're saved by the grace of God. And, anytime, any moment, and any place anybody says "yes" to Christ and means it, then he steps from death to life. He's been born again. No, Jesus is not talking about baptism here.

What is water a symbol of, when the Bible says in John 3, verse 5, we're *"born of water and of the Spirit"* (John 3:5)? He's talking about the Word of God. Water, in the Bible, is a symbol for the Word of God. In Isaiah, God says, "Is not my word as the rain cometh down from heaven?" (Isaiah 55:10). Again, the Bible speaks of *"the washing of*

regeneration” (Titus 3:5). And, the Bible speaks of “*washing of water by the word*” (Ephesians 5:26). And again, Peter says that “*being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (1 Peter 1:23). He’s saying that the Word of God is like a sperm; it is like incorruptible seed. And, that’s the idea of the seed—not a seed like a plant seed, but a sperm. Now, when the Spirit of God and the Word of God come together in the bosom of a human being, there’s something that happens: there is an impregnation; there is a germination; there is a conception that results. That’s the reason always, in every service, there must be two things present—and oh, let’s see that they’re always present at Bellevue Baptist Church: number one, the preaching of the Word of God; and number two, the presence of the dear Holy Spirit of God. Amen.

But, you remember when Mary, who was to be the mother of the Lord Jesus, had that miracle that was formed in her? Remember those elements that were there? The angel of the Lord spoke to her. That was the Word of God. And, Mary said, “*How shall this be...?*” (Luke 1:34). And, the angel said, “*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee*” (Luke 1:35). That’s the Spirit of God, but there was one more thing that was necessary. Mary said, “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*” (Luke 1:38). And, when you get the Word of God, the work of the Spirit, and the will of man—a new birth. When you would say, “Today, when you hear the Word of God”; and when God says, “I want Christ to be formed in you. I want a miracle to take place in you”; and there is the Word of God, and there’s the work of the Spirit that makes that word real to you; and you say, “Be it done unto me according to thy word,” a miracle as great as the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the new birth—just as miraculous—will take place in you. You’ll be born again.

II. A Birth Involves a Creation

Now, let me say something else: Jesus used the figure of a birth because not only does it speak of a conception, but a birth also speaks of an impartation of life. How do little babies get here? Parents don’t manufacture babies; they have babies. But, what the parents do is impart to that baby life. The life is first in the parents, and the life comes from the parents to the child. You see, life is a miraculous thing, a supernatural thing. It is given of God, and God is the custodian of life. The Bible says, “*In him was life*” (John 1:4). Now, even the birth of a baby in the natural realm is a miraculous thing. There must be this impartation of life, and so it is in the spiritual world: when we are saved, God gives us life.

Jesus Christ said in John chapter 10 verse 10: “*I am come that they might have life,*

and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). There are a lot of folks who are listening to me today—some watching by television, some listening by radio, and some in this place. And, you have existence, but you don’t have life. Jesus was speaking to people who were already existing, and He said that *“I [have] come that [you] might have life”* (John 10:10). Now, you receive physical life from your physical birth, but you will receive spiritual life from your spiritual birth. When you are born again, you become a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Gospel of John is the gospel of life. And, as a matter of fact, the word *life* is used at least thirty-six times in the Gospel of John. You see, by a birth there is an impartation of life.

III. A Birth Involves a Character

Now, watch it: a conception—that conception brings life. And, what does that life bring? That life brings a new nature. Whose life is it? It is the life of the parents. Therefore, whose nature will it be? It’ll be the nature of the parents. And, when you’re born again, the Bible teaches that you become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). You are going to be like your Father. You are a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Now, what happens—listen: Christians are not just nice people; they’re new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). They are born again, and they share the nature of God. Now, if that nature doesn’t dwell in you, if that nature doesn’t live in you, you’ve never been born again. We are *“partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Peter 1:4). God sends His Holy Spirit into us, and we’re born of God. And, the Bible says that His seed, His sperm, remains in us. Oh, if we could only understand this! So many people sit on church pews on Sunday morning—they’ve never become a partaker of the divine nature; they’ve gone through ritual; they have their name of the church roll, but they’ve never been born again.

What are the signs of the divine nature? If God is in you, how can you know? What is the nature of God?

A. If You Have the Divine Nature, You Will Be Holy

Well, I’ll tell you one thing about the nature of God: the nature of God is the nature of holiness—holiness. He says, *“Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16). That is, like Father, like Son. *“Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16). Now, that word *holy*—does that scare you? All that means is a love for righteousness and a hatred for sin. Do you have that? I do, in my heart and in my own life. There are people who are members of churches who are nothing but baptized pagans living double lives. They have no hatred of sin. All they want is a fire escape so they’ll not go hell. But, I want to tell you, my dear friend, that if you are saved, if you are born again, there is going to be in your heart and in your life a hatred for sin. Now, I don’t mean you are going to be sinless and perfect—you’re not. And, nobody is sinless and perfect, but there is going to be an inner desire

for holiness.

B. If You Have the Divine Nature, You Will Love the Lord

I'll tell you another mark of divine nature: you're going to love the Lord Jesus Christ—you are. What—what—is the nature of God? The nature of God is that He loves His Son. God spoke from the Glory, and He said of the Lord Jesus Christ, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). Now, if you are a partaker of the divine nature, you are going to have a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It might sound corny, but you are looking at a man who loves Jesus. I love Jesus. I'm not ashamed to tell you I love the Lord Jesus Christ. He's real to me—real to me. When I look at a person and I want to know, "Is that person saved?", I don't say, "Well, how much of the Bible does he know?" or, "How many times does he go to church?" or, "How much money does he give?" I want to say, "Does that man love the Savior? Does he love Jesus? Has he become a partaker of the divine nature?"

C. If You Have the Divine Nature, You Will Love Lost Souls

I'll tell you something else about him: if he has the divine nature of God, he's going to love what God loves, and that is Jesus. And, if he loves Jesus, he's going to love what Jesus loves, and that's lost souls. He's going to love lost souls. He's going to want people saved. From the moment—the very moment—that I found Christ as my Savior, to this moment, there is in my heart a yearning, burning desire to see people come to Jesus Christ. I want people to have what I have. I want people to know what I know. I believe that Jesus Christ is the answer to this world's problem. How on earth can a man say that he's a child of God, how on earth can anyone say that he's born again, how can a man say that he is a partaker of the divine nature if he doesn't want to see other people saved and back it up with his life? Do you have a passion, a concern, and a desire that people know Christ as their personal Savior and Lord?

D. If You Have the Divine Nature, You Will Love the Bible

Oh, my friend, listen—I'll tell you something else: when you're a partaker of the divine nature, you're going to love the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible says in the book of Peter, *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"* (1 Peter 2:2). There are some people who never read this Bible, never care for this Bible. They don't understand the Bible; they don't love the Bible. Listen, listen, listen: if you love the Lord, you're going to love His Word, if you're a partaker of the divine nature. It is the Spirit of truth, and this Bible is truth. And, you're going to love the Word of God. As a newborn baby cries after milk, you're going to cry after the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2).

Some of you have no desire for the Word of God. You don't desire the Word of God. It's distasteful to you. You'd rather read a newspaper. You'd rather watch a television program. You'd never crack it open; perhaps under a guilt trip sometimes you do it, and, like, you know, a dose a day keeps the devil away. But, you never have a real desire for the Word of God. There's no hunger for God's Word. I wonder if you're saved. You see, look, a birth means a conception. A conception means a life, and a life means a nature. You have become a partaker of the divine nature. You are born again. And, like Father, like son: the things that are true about the Father are going to be true about you.

IV. A Birth Involves a Commencement

Now, let me say something else about this thing called a "new birth": it's a brand new start. Now, when a baby is born, he's all tomorrows. That baby is no yesterday, but he is all tomorrow. One thing you'll not see when a baby is born down here at the maternity wards—you'll not see a sheriff there ready to arrest that little baby for some crime he's done. Uh huh. You know, as far as the law is concerned, you look in the face, and that innocence personifies that little child—nothing against that child. That child is born in here with no yesterdays; he is all tomorrows. And, so it is when you get saved. The Bible says, *"Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea"* (Micah 7:19). The Bible says, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:12). The Bible says, *"Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back"* (Isaiah 38:17). The Bible says that God—*"their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"* (Hebrews 8:12). Isn't that wonderful? Glory to God! Hallelujah!

I don't care what you've done. Friend, if a prostitute was to come down this aisle today... And doubtless, as many people as are listening this morning, there'll be some prostitute listening this morning. And, God loves them very much. If a prostitute were to come down this aisle this morning and give her heart to Jesus, at that moment, not only would she be saved; she would become an arch virgin in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't care what you've done; I don't care how deep your sin is; I don't care if you're a murderer; I don't care if you're a sodomite—it makes no difference. *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). Every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish that ever came across the soul—whiter than snow, the Lord Jesus makes it. It is gone, my friend. He's like a brand new babe. He's all tomorrows; he's no yesterdays. Hallelujah! That's wonderful.

I was looking last night in my study, or maybe early this morning, at a passage over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9. Look at it—look at it: *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"* Now, listen to me folks. Those of you

who are living in sin and double lives, listen to this. *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators”*—that’s people who are living sexual...lives of sexual impurity; that is, living sexually active before marriage—*“nor idolaters”*—that is, people who love, fear, or serve anything more than God—*“nor adulterers”*—that is, people who are unfaithful to their marriage vows—*“nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind”*—that is, people who are sexually perverted, sodomites—*“Nor thieves, nor covetous”*—and it’s very interesting that he put “covetous,” which is an all-American sin right in this other list, isn’t it?—*“nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Now, you see, we, today, have made mockery of the grace of God, and there are some people who are living these kinds of lives who have the idea they are going to heaven. Friend, you could be baptized so many times the tadpoles know your Social Security number. But, if you’re living this way, you better check up to see if you haven’t been deceived. Paul says, “Don’t be deceived” (1 Corinthians 6:9).

“Well,” you say, “then who can be saved?” Well, look, if you will, in the next verse. What a blessing it is: *“And such were some of you”*—verse 11. Not *are*, but *were* some of you—*“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Hallelujah! Not *are*, but *were*. Those things are now in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. God has forgiven. God has cleansed. God has made you whole, and God has made you fewer. That’s what we call a “new birth,” and that’s the reason Jesus called it a “new birth.”

V. A Birth Involves a Completion

Now, I want to say something else about a baby. When that baby is born—are you paying attention?—when a baby is born—listen to me now—a baby is complete, but a baby is not mature. He is complete but not mature. That is, you get all you’re going to get when you get born. You don’t go back and have more equipment added later on. I mean, that’s it. You might have something artificially put on you, but I’m just telling you, folks, as far as the real you, you get it all when you’re born. Now, this is true about salvation: you get everything when you’re born. You spend the rest of your life discovering and developing what you got when you were born.

Have you ever watched a little baby, for example, discover its hands? I’ve done that. A little baby, at first, doesn’t even know it has hands. After a while, its little eyes begin to focus, and it begins to suck and play with its fingers. Then, you put those little toys up there over their crib, and the little baby touches those things and maybe grasps your hands a little bit. And then, after a while, it learns to hold the toys. Then, after a while, those little fingers begin to learn how to tie shoes and brush their teeth. And, how they

fumble trying to tie their shoes! But, after a while, they learn. Then, they learn to hold a pencil. Before long, they can type. And, after a while, they're playing a violin, then doing surgery—the same fingers, those little fingers...that day. He got those fingers when he was born, but he had to discover and had to develop those things. Now, that's true many of you, dear friend. You need to understand that, when you get saved, God gives it to you all, but you may stumble and you may fall. There's a lot you need to learn. You are complete, but you are not mature. You've got to *"grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

You know the reason that some folks don't get saved? They're trying to grow up and then get born. That's right. They say, "Well, I'm just too weak." Well, of course you are. You've got to get born so you can begin to *"grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18). But, you get it all when you're born. You know, there's a heresy around—there's a heresy around—that you get saved, and then, after you get saved, after a while, then you receive the Holy Spirit. Now friend, not only is that wrong; that's heresy. And, as sure as I say this, somebody's going to write me and try to straighten me out, but you just save yourself twenty cents or whatever it costs. Now listen, the Bible says, *"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* (Romans 8:9). When you get saved, you receive the Lord Jesus Christ. And, the Bible says, *"In Him we are complete"* (Colossians 2:10). *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (Colossians 2:9). And, when you received the Lord Jesus Christ and when you were born again, friend, you got it all. You were not mature, but you're complete. And, you're going to spend the rest of your life discovering and developing what you got when you got saved.

People say, "Do you believe in the second blessing?" I'll tell you what the second blessing is: the second blessing is discovering what you got in the first one, and the third blessing is discovering you didn't discover it all in the second one. Amen. And, you just keep on discovering that it's all in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is all, and all is in Him. And, when you receive Christ... When you say, "Jesus," you've said it all. You've received the Lord Jesus Christ. And, He comes into you through His Spirit. And, *"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ"*—the Bible says in Romans 8—*"he is none of his"* (Romans 8:9).

A baby is complete but not mature. So, when you get saved, that doesn't mean that you're perfect. That doesn't mean that you don't need to learn. It doesn't mean that you don't need to grow. It doesn't mean that you're not going to stumble. It doesn't mean that you're going to be able to be like the rest of these saints automatically. You will not. You will be complete. You are a member of the family. But, you're going to have to grow.

VI. A Birth Involves a Certainty

Now, let me say something else about a birth: a birth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Now, nobody is born twice physically, right? Anybody here that's been more than twice—more than once—physically? Of course not. That's what—that's what—confused Nicodemus. Jesus said that he had to be born again (John 3:7). Nicodemus said, *“How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?”* (John 3:4). Jesus said, “Nicodemus, you're getting confused. *‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh’* (John 3:6). That's finished. Now, you've got to have another birth; you have to be born of the Spirit.” But, how many people can be born of the flesh twice? Physically, none, of course. That's finished. That which is born—it's born (John 3:6). And, that's done; that's finished—not another physical birth. “Now, Nicodemus, you need another birth—a spiritual birth—but both births are a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

Now, there are some people who believe that you can get saved, and then be lost again, and then be saved again. No—no. Listen, friend: when you are born, you can't be unborn. You say, “Well, yeah, but what if you die?” My body might die, but I'm going to go on, friend. I'll be somewhere in heaven or hell for all eternity. And, by the way, I'll be in heaven, okay? For all eternity—for all eternity. And, when there came into this world an Adrian Rogers, I could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. I am made in the image of God, and I will go on, endless, timeless, dateless, measureless. That which was born the first time of the flesh will exist forever. And, I want to tell you, that which was born of the Spirit will exist forever. And, once I am born of the Spirit, then I cannot be unborn. I will live and exist forever in that spiritual form.

Now, if you don't believe what I'm saying to you, I want to give you a challenge. You take this challenge before you write me and tell me that I'm wrong. You find in the Bible anywhere where anybody was saved twice. All right, I'm throwing you a challenge. You won't find it—you won't find it—any more than you could go out into this city and find a human being that has been physically born twice. You can't find it. You see, a birth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And, this business of getting saved and lost, and saved and lost, and saved and lost—the Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible teaches, dear friends, that when we are born, we are born from above by the Spirit of God. And, God keeps—God keeps.

“Oh,” you say, “does that mean you've got a license to sin?” *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth... But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Hebrews 12:6–8). That's what God says in the book of Hebrews. Some of you...name on a church roll somewhere—you're living in sin, and you're counting on eternal

security. Don't count on it, bud; you're going to hell. I'm not preaching a sinning religion. If there's unconfessed sin in your heart right now, one of two things are true about you: either you're saved and God's going to carry you to the woodshed, or you're lost and you're going to hell. The doctrine of eternal security is not a license to sin. "*Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]*" (Hebrews 12:6). But, there are some of you who don't receive chastening. You just live in sin, and you don't receive chastening. And, that's because you haven't been born again. God said, "If you were mine, I would have settled that long ago."

One last thing, and I'll be finished, dear friend: a birth implies a certainty. You ought to know it if you've been born. Now, sometimes you might ask somebody, "Hey, are you born again?" Do you know what they'll say? Something like this: "Well, I sure hope so. I think I am. Maybe I am. I'm doing the best I can." Well, now, let's put that over in the physical realm. Suppose I would ask you, "Have you ever been born physically?" You would say, "Well I hope so. I think so. I'm doing the best I can." Wouldn't that be a ridiculous answer? Now, you see, dear friends, a spiritual birth ought to be as real as a physical birth. Will Rogers went to get a passport, and they said, "Well, we will need a birth certificate." He said, "What for?" They said, "Well, for proof of your birth." He said, "Well, I'm here, ain't I? That ought to be good enough."

Conclusion

Friend, listen: if you've been born again, the Bible says, "*He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*" (1 John 5:10). And, God's Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, that you've been born into the family of God, and that you're a partaker of the divine nature. And, if you're not absolutely certain that you've been born again, remember that Jesus said, "*[You] must be born again*" (John 3:7)—"*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of [heaven]*" (John 3:3).

Lifting Up Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 6, 1979

Main Scripture Text: John 3:14–18

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

JOHN 3:14

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, with me to John chapter 3, the third chapter of John, and I want us to begin reading, please, in verse 14. I know you’re familiar with John chapter 3. The Bible says, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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 3:14–16) Notice that phrase in verse 14, “and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” I want to speak to you today on this subject: “Lifting Up Jesus.”

What does that mean: “*as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness*”? Well, let’s turn in our Bibles and see. It’s written there in Numbers chapter 21, and let’s find out what it’s about. You’ll be amazed over here in Numbers chapter 21 to find out something about Jesus. But I want to say, dear friend, that all of the Bible is about Jesus. Somebody said, “Have you read the four Gospels?” Friend, I’ve read all sixty-six—all of them are about the Lord Jesus. The Old Testament says somebody is coming, and that somebody is Jesus. The Gospels say somebody has come, and that somebody is Jesus. The Epistles and the Revelation say somebody is coming again, and that somebody is Jesus Christ. All of the Bible is about Jesus. *And if you read the Bible and you don’t see the story of Jesus, you had better re-read the Bible, because standing somewhere in the shadows you’ll find Jesus.* And here’s a wonderful picture of Jesus. For the Bible says, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up,*” and the Bible tells us what Moses did a long, long time ago back in the Old Testament is a picture of Jesus.

Are you ready for it? Let’s read and see what happened here in Numbers chapter 21, and I begin reading in verse 5: “*And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*” (Numbers 21:5–9)

“Now,” you say, “Adrian Rogers, that’s an interesting story, but I fail to see how it pictures the Lord Jesus.” Well, I trust by the time we’re finished this morning that you will see one of the most clear, concise pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ and how to be saved that is found anywhere in the Bible. I preached this message last week down in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and one of the young men of our church who was there said, “Pastor, you ought to preach that Sunday morning.” And God used that to put a barb into my soul, and God said, “That’s right: there are a lot of people who are listening to you who really do not know exactly how to be saved, and you need to preach a

message to make it so clear, so plain, that anybody can understand what it means to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and how to be saved.”

I received a letter in the mail this week from a lady who said, “I don’t know whether I’m saved or not. I’m not quite sure what it means. I don’t quite know how to receive Christ.” Sometimes we preachers think that we are making it clear, we think that we’re making it plain, and yet there are still some people who don’t understand the marvelous, glorious way of salvation. And yet it’s so simple and so easy. The Bible says, *“Wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”* (Isaiah 35:8) So I want us to look today at this simple message, this glorious message, on how to be saved. And we’re going to put it in four or five headings.

I. **A Sinful Rebellion**

First of all, I want you to see a sinful rebellion. Notice, if you would, please, in verse 5. And the Bible says, *“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.”*

Now here were people in a rebellious state of mind. God was going to bring them from the land of bondage, which was the land of Egypt, through the wilderness to the Promised Land, the land that flowed with milk and honey; and right in the middle of their journey, they started to murmur, and they started to complain, and they rebelled against God. And their rebellion was threefold.

A. **They Doubted God’s Promise**

First of all, they doubted God’s promise, because God had not said they were going to die in the wilderness. They said, “Moses, did you bring us out here to die?” God had not said anything about dying in the wilderness. God said, “I’m going to take you to a land that flows with milk and honey, a land of grapes and pomegranates and figs, a land of victory.” But they doubted God’s promise. And may I say, that’s where all sin begins: doubting God’s promise. *Unbelief is the major sin, the mother sin, the father sin, the sin out of which all other sins grow, and it is the one sin that will damn you and send you to hell.* Men don’t go to hell primarily because they lie, steal, or cheat. 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 the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* (John 3:18) And the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is come into the world to convince men of sin, because they believe not. (John 16:9)

Unbelief is a terrible horrible sin. It’s never an intellectual matter; it’s always a moral matter. The Bible says, *“Take heed...lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”* (Hebrews 3:12) And they doubted God’s promise, and the Bible says, *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.”* (1 John 5:10) Can you think of any greater sin

than to point the finger of unbelief at God and say, “Thou liest, O God”; to aim the gun of unbelief at the Christ on the cross and refuse to receive Him?

B. They Disdained God’s Provision

But not only did they doubt God’s promise; they disdained God’s provision. They said, “Our souls loathe this light bread.” Now what was the light bread? What were they talking about? They were talking about manna. God was feeding him supernaturally with manna, bread from heaven. It came down from heaven. And the Bible tells us that bread from heaven also represented the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 6:30–35) It came down from heaven. Jesus came down from heaven. It was miraculous. Jesus was miraculous. It was round. That spoke of His eternity: He never had an ending, never had a beginning. It was white. That spoke of His purity. It had in it the flavor of oil, which speaks of the Holy Spirit that was upon Him. It was sweet. That spoke of His sweetness. It lay upon the ground, which spoke of His humiliation. It had to be picked up. That spoke of His resurrection. It had to be eaten. That speaks of our trusting the Lord and assimilating the Lord. It gave life, as Jesus gives life. And it was a picture of the Lord Jesus. But they said, “We don’t want it. Our souls loathe this light bread. We had rather have this world’s garlic than to have heaven’s bread.”

C. They Despised God’s Prophet

And so, not only did they doubt God’s promise; they disdained God’s provision. And then they also despised God’s prophet. Notice here again in verse 5, and it says, “*And the people spake against God, and against Moses.*” You see, when they fall out with God, they generally fall out with God’s prophet, too. And they were angry with God, and also therefore they were angry with Moses.

And so preachers ought not to get upset if all people don’t like them. Sometimes people say, “Brother Rogers, you know, there’s somebody who doesn’t like you.” Well, do tell. Look, friend, Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you.” (Luke 6:26)

The former pastor of this church, Dr. Lee, said, “One of these days somebody is going to preach my funeral.” We all doubted that for a long time, because he just kept on living on. But he said, “If that preacher stands up and says, ‘Here lies told Dr. Lee: he didn’t have an enemy,’ I pray God He’d give me the strength to kick the lid off that coffin and say, ‘That’s a lie!’”

A man is known by the enemies he makes. And they disdain God’s prophet.

I remember hearing about Billy Sunday one day—Billy Sunday, a great preacher of yesteryear, the Billy Graham of his day, but he was a lot more rambunctious than Billy Graham—and Billy Sunday was sort of a fire-eating preacher, you know. He was really preaching an excoriating message against sin and when he finished, somebody said, “Billy, you’d better tone it down a little bit.” He said, “Why?” They said, “Well, you’re

rubbing the fur on the cat the wrong way.” He said, “The old cat is headed towards hell. If she’d turn around, I’d be rubbing it the right way.”

There are some people who don’t like a certain kind of preaching. I understand that. People won’t like you, you know. They say, “Well, I come to church on Sunday to be made to feel good. I don’t want some man up there ranting, raving, and pointing his finger at me, telling me I’ve got to repent and get right with God and all of this sort of business.”

Well, here it was: a rebellious people. They doubted God’s promise, disdained God’s provision, and despised God’s prophet.

II. A Sure Retribution

All right, so, number one: a sinful rebellion. Now number two: a sure retribution. Look in verse 6: “*And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.*”

Now, why did God do this? Well, the serpent in the Bible is always a symbol of sin. From the first time when the serpent crawled his slimy corroding frame into the pages of history in the Garden of Eden, the serpent has always been a symbol of sin. You could almost hear the hiss of the serpent as you say the word *sin*, and the serpent here is symbolizing sin, and also the misery that sin brings. And God wanted to show them if they were bound to sin, they were bound to suffer, and so everywhere there were hideous reptiles. Can you imagine, ladies, not being able to walk anywhere without stepping on a snake? They were there in the beds. They were there in the houses. They were there in the cabinets. And people were being bitten by these serpents. And God did it.

Now some people don’t like the idea that God did it, but I want to say several things about this retribution.

A. It Was a Fitting Retribution

Number one: It was a fitting retribution. It was fitting that God should do this. Now today we think that God has no right to punish sin. And as I’ve said before, I have a conviction that *if the Supreme Court of America could vote upon it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment*. They say God has no right to do that. Let me tell you something, friend. *It is not that God is too good to punish sin; it is that God is too good not to punish sin*. It is the goodness of God, the righteousness of God, and the holiness of God that says that sin must be punished. And if you die and go to hell, it won’t be God’s fault; it will be your fault.

Let me just explain it this way. Suppose that you get sick, and the doctor comes to your bedside and he examines you, and then the doctor has a very grave, serious

expression on his face, and you say, “What is the matter, Doctor? Can it be that bad?” He says, “It’s very serious. You’re going to die. And there’s nothing medical science can do for you.” You say, “Now, wait a minute, Doctor. I don’t want to die. Isn’t there some way? Isn’t there some cure?” And suppose he says, “Well, there is a cure. There is a medicine, serum, a remedy that is so rare, so valuable, that enough of it to save your life would cost a king’s ransom. Do you have any money?” You say, “No, Doctor, I don’t have any money.” And the doctor says, “Well, let me see what can do.”

And suppose the doctor leaves your bedside, and he’s gone for several days, and when he comes back, his hair is disheveled, his eyes are sunken back in his head, there are dark circles under his eyes, his face is white, his beard is grown out, his hands are trembling, and his clothing is torn and bloodstained. You say, “My Lord, Doctor! Where have you been? What has happened to you?” And the doctor holds out a little vial of medicine and he says, “Do you see this?” He says, “I went to secure this medicine for you.” He says, “I went to every foundation that I could go to, to get enough money to purchase this medicine. I still didn’t have enough, so,” he says, “I withdrew my savings from the bank in order to purchase this for you. And,” he says, “I was in such a rush to get down here to your bedside that on the way I wrecked my automobile, and the blood that you see on my shirt is the blood of my only son who was with me in the car. I have just come from the morgue where I left his dead and mangled body in order to bring this medicine to you. But here it is. Take it, and you’ll live.”

Suppose you took that vial of medicine, looked at it for a while, and then dashed it on the floor, and the bottle broke, and the contents ran out into the rug never to be recovered. And then suppose you pointed your finger in the face of that doctor and said, “Doctor, if I die, it will be your fault.”

Now I want to tell you something, friend. It is fitting that God would have a hell in which He would punish men who would refuse such love and such mercy. And you’ll never be able to point a finger in the face of God and say, “God, if I go to hell, it’s your fault.” Friend, if you go to hell, it’s your fault. God put His darling Son on the cross, and God, in infinite love and mercy, sent Jesus Christ. And if you disdain God’s provision; if you doubt God’s promise; if you despise God’s prophet, you can’t point your finger at God and say, “God, if I die, it’s your fault.” No, it was a fitting retribution.

B. It Was a Fiery Retribution

I want to say furthermore, it was a fiery retribution. Notice again in verse 6. And the Bible says, “*And the LORD sent fiery serpents.*” What does that mean? It means that with every bite of the serpent, when those fatal fangs which sink into that flesh, which send an awful excruciating pain up and down the nerve fibers of that person, the tempers would begin to throb with pain, and every nerve would become a strand of liquid fire,

and their joints would stiffen, and their eyes would begin to glaze. What He was saying is this; what God was teaching them is that it's a painful thing to rebel against God.

Now the world doesn't believe that. Do you know what the world believes? The world believes it's a painful thing to serve God. I've heard it so many times: "It's hard to be a Christian." Where did you get that? You didn't get it out of the Word of God. It's not hard to be a Christian. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 28 to 30. He said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*"—easy and light. "*And ye shall rest unto your souls.*" (Matthew 11:28–30)

Listen. The Bible says in the book of Proverbs, "*The way of transgressors is hard*"—Proverbs 13:15. (Proverbs 13:15) It's not hard to be a Christian; it's hard not to be a Christian. Friend, listen. I'm having a wonderful time serving the Lord Jesus. You say, "You mean there's no suffering?" Friend, there's suffering in this world, whether you're saved or lost. You're not going to get out unbent, unbloodied, unbowed—you're not! But I want to tell you there is joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus is the One who makes the sufferings of this life worth it all. And Jesus is the One who gives pain and sorrow. And Jesus is the One who turns every tear into a pearl and for a diadem for us. The Lord Jesus Christ is that One.

C. It Was a Fatal Retribution

Oh, listen! The bite of the serpent is a fitting bite. It is a fiery bite. I want to say, thirdly, it is fatal. Verse 6 says, "*And much people of Israel died.*" They died.

What was God showing them? What was God teaching them? God was teaching them a great object lesson that we all need to learn, and it is this: "*The wages of sin is death*"; (Romans 6:23) "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) And it is not talking here primarily about physical death. That physical death was only an illustration of the greater spiritual death. The Bible says in James 1 and verse 15, "*Then when lust hath conceived, bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*" (James 1:15)

Someone says, "Well, Brother Rogers, you say that the bite of the serpents is a fiery bite: I'm doing all right. You say it's a fatal bite: I don't feel so bad." **You remind me of a man that jumped out of a ten-story building, and as he passed each floor, he said, "It's okay so far!"** "*Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*"

III. A Saving Remedy

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: Not only a sinful rebellion; and not only a sure retribution; but I want you to notice a saving remedy. I want you to notice what happened here. And we begin reading in verse 7: "*Therefore the people came to*

Moses, and said, *We have sinned.*” Boy, that’s a good starting place, isn’t it? Oh, friend, *there’s one thing that God will not accept for sin, and that is an excuse, an alibi, or a denial.* We have sinned. And you will never get right with God until you come to that place. For the Bible says, *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) And they said, *“We have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* And they said, *“We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”*

Now here is the saving remedy. And why did God do this? The people went to Moses, Moses went to God, and God said Moses, “All right, here’s what you do. Go down here to the foundry and get you some brass, form a serpent, fasten that serpent, impale it upon a pole, and lift it up in the middle of the camp. And then you tell everyone that if they’ll look at it, they’ll live.” Now, why? Because Jesus said, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”* That serpent was a picture and an object lesson of Jesus Christ.

Now you say, “Mr. Rogers, how could a hideous reptile, a slithering serpent, be a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ? I thought you said that the serpent was the symbol of sin.” You’re right. But pay attention. Have you ever heard this verse? “Him who knew no sin”—that’s Jesus—“God hath made to be sin for us.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Jesus Christ became sin for me, for you. The Bible says in Isaiah, *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”—on Jesus—“the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6) All of my sin was laid on Jesus. And Jesus was willing to become like that hideous reptile. Jesus Christ became sin for me. The Lamb of God becomes the snake of Satan. He takes our sin. He takes our judgment.

And it was a serpent of brass. Why? Because all the way through the Bible brass is a symbol of judgment. And what God was saying is that sin must be judged before man can be saved. Sin must be judged before man can be saved. God can’t just overlook our sins. And here was a picture of Jesus Christ becoming sin for us. And after Jesus Christ became sin for us, Jesus Christ took our curse for us. He was put upon a pole. *“Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree,”* (Galatians 3:13) the Bible says. Jesus was impaled upon that cross just as that serpent was impaled upon that pole and lifted up. And that’s why Jesus, knowing that He would be crucified, said, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”*

And I want you to notice several things about this remedy.

A. It Was a Sovereign Remedy

The first thing I want you to notice is that it was a sovereign remedy. Look, if you will, please, in verse 8: *“And the LORD said unto Moses...”* Now this isn’t Moses’s idea; this was God’s idea. Moses didn’t conjure it up. This was God’s revealed way of redemption and salvation. It was God’s sovereign plan. I want to tell you God has a sovereign plan for you, and God’s way for you to be saved is the cross. And there is no other way, because *“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,”*—and that was the only way then—*“even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”*

*Sometimes we have a little saying that says, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” Well, friend, if God said it, that settles it, whether you believe it or not, amen? I mean, God said, “Moses...” I’ve said before that *Jesus Christ is not the best way to heaven; Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.* “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name given under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) It was a sovereign remedy.*

B. It Was a Sufficient Remedy

And then I want to say something else about it: It was a sufficient remedy. Look again, if you will, in verse 8. And it says, *“Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”* I want to say to every sin-enslaved person; I want to say to every person who has been infected by sin, that Jesus will save you today. You say, “Brother Rogers, is Jesus sufficient for me?” Yes, He is. I don’t know what your problem is, but I do know the answer—and the answer is Jesus. He is not only necessary; Jesus is enough.

C. It Was a Sure Remedy

Not only was it a sovereign remedy; not only was it sufficient; but it was a sure remedy. Notice what it says again in verse 8: *“When he looketh upon it, shall live.”* Just underscore the *“shall.”* Now, folks, I want to tell you something: *If you can show me any time, anywhere, where anybody ever came to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and Jesus Christ did not save that person, I’ll close this book and never preach from it again.* I guarantee you. Well, not I’ll guarantee you; God guarantees. It’s in the book: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31)—you will. You say, “Brother Rogers, will Jesus save me today if I trust Him?” Of course He will! The Bible says—Jesus is speaking—*“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37) It was a sovereign remedy. It was the sufficient remedy. It was a sure remedy: “Whosoever looketh shall live.”

IV. The Simple Requirement

Now I want you to notice another thing: I want you to notice not only the saving remedy, but I want you to notice the simple requirement. Go back and look in verse 8 with me

again: “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.*” Underscore that: “*when he looketh.*” Notice how simple it was. It was so simple it was almost absurd. You would expect God to have some convoluted, contrived plan that man would have to get through, very intricate; but God made it so simple. All they had to do was to look and to live.

And again God is teaching us such a wonderful lesson about salvation—because notice the simple requirement.

A. It Was Easy

Number one: It was easy. Now, let me tell you something. We have some preachers today who are preaching against what they call an “easy-believism,” and I appreciate what they’re doing. They’re saying that you have to emphasize the lordship of Christ, and none of this “easy-believism.” Well, friend, you had better be careful: you’ll distort the gospel. What do you want: a “hard-believism”? I mean, it’s not hard to believe; it is easy to believe—just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They didn’t have to wait for it or work for it; they didn’t have to pray for it or pay for it; all they had to do was look and live. And don’t you add one scintilla of works to it. “*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.*” (Ephesians 2:8–9) “*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” (Romans 4:5) And that’s the gospel, friend. It is easy. It is easy. It’s easy to understand. I mean, you didn’t have to be a PhD to understand it. Little children can understand that.

Sometimes we hear preachers preach and we say, “Oh, man, I didn’t understand him: he must be very intelligent.” Don’t kid yourself. Just because a river is muddy doesn’t mean it’s deep. The Bible says of Jesus that “*the common people heard him gladly.*” (Mark 12:27) And especially in this matter of how to be saved, it is so easy, it is so simple, that the Bible says that “*the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.*” (Isaiah 35:8)

B. It Was Essential

It is easy. But wait a minute: It was also essential. Don’t think that because salvation is free and because it is simple, it’s not important. That would be a tragic mistake. That’s the way the mind works. We think, “Well, if it’s simple, it must not be important. If it is so easy, then it must be cheap.” Oh, no. We don’t believe in cheap grace; we believe in free grace. Now there is a big difference. Oh, Jesus died in agony and blood, and there was no other way.

Suppose we were back there in the burning, blistering desert of Sinai and we decide that we are going to do a little witnessing. And we come up to this man and we see this

man is snake-bit: “I say, wouldn’t you like to be healed from snakebite?” He says, “Now, Mr. Rogers, you have some people down there at your church who are worse than I am.” Have you ever heard anything like that? Isn’t that amazing how that some man will stretch himself out alongside some old hypocrite and say, “I’m better than he is”?

Friend, you had better start measuring yourself by Jesus Christ. I’ve been looking for a man honest enough to say, “I’m just as bad as those folks down there at church,” instead of saying, “I’m just as good as those folks down there at church.” For *the church is nothing but a society of sinners who finally admitted it*, amen? *It’s the only organization that I know of where you have to confess that you are bad before you can join, unless it is Hell’s Angels.* I mean, you have to say, “I am a sinner,” before you can get in. “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*” (1 Timothy 1:15) Jesus said, “I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matthew 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32) Don’t tell me that you are better than somebody else. If you have been bitten, you are going to die. “*The wages of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23)

Oh, I talk to another man, and I say, “Wouldn’t you like to be healed?” And he says, “Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Rogers, I believe that I can get rid of this thing. I’ll just shake it off, this ol’ snake. I’ll get rid of it.”

Well, friend, it’s not just a matter of shaking off the snake. The snake, the venom, is within. And the problem with sin is no longer what you do; it is what you are, amen? It’s the heart now; it’s the whole system that is eaten up with a thing called sin. And, dear friend, it’s not your habits; it’s your heart.

Every now and then you’ll talk to a man, for example; let’s say he’s a drinker, let’s say he’s a drunkard, and you talk to him and say, “Jesus Christ can set you free, and Jesus Christ can save you,” and he says, “Well now, Mr. Rogers, I can quit drinking anytime I want to; I can get rid of this thing.” You notice he never wants to. But, “I can get rid of this thing anytime I want to.” Well, suppose he does. That will just mean he’ll go to hell sober—if he doesn’t get saved, amen?

The President’s brother went out to get dried out—that Billy beer didn’t work on him too well—and somebody asked him when he came back, “You’ve quit drinking: does this mean you’ve been born again?” And he said, “*Blank* no.” Well, friend, let me tell you something. I hope he does get born again, because if he doesn’t, he’ll rue the day he was ever born at all.

You see, it’s not just simply getting rid of your habits. It’s not the problem outside. It’s the problem within.

Suppose I talked to another man, and I say, “Sir, would you like to be healed?” And he says, “Well now, Mr. Rogers, I’ll tell you what. You have your way, and I’ll have mine. I’m going to try Grandma’s liniment.” Well, dear friend, if he does, he’ll die, because Grandma’s liniment is not going to save him.

God only has one plan. You say, “Well now, you say everybody has to be saved; well, I think different.” Well, you can think whatever you want, but remember it was a sovereign remedy. It’s what God said, not what Adrian Rogers said. Now if I’m not preaching what’s in the Bible, well, that’s something else. But if I’m preaching in the Bible, and I read in Acts 4:12, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,”* (Acts 4:12) than the name of Jesus, friend, that’s not my opinion, that’s God’s Word, and we have to. And so a man says, “Well, I’m going to try something else.” There is no other way. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6)

I talk to another man, and I say, “Wouldn’t you like to be healed?” And he says, “Well, to tell you the truth, I don’t know. I’ll have to think about it. I’ve just kind of become attached to my snake.” I say, “What’s that?” “Well, at least it’s attached to me. You know, I just kind of like this snake.” I just can’t believe my ears. I say, “You mean, you want that hideous reptile? You want that?” “Yeah, I kind of like it. You know, I’ve gotten used to it. I’d hate to have to give it up.”

“Well,” you say, “that’s stupid, Brother Rogers.” Well, yeah, but you know, you talk to some men and say, “Wouldn’t you like to be saved?” and they say, “Well, I kind of hate to give up my sin.” Hate to give up your sin? Listen, friend. Pay attention. The only thing God will ever ask you to give up are the things that will hurt you—that’s all, just the things that will hurt you. The Bible says, *“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) Isn’t that a good verse: “no good thing”? Friend, if it will make you healthy, happy, wholesome, holy, God says, “Help yourself.” God is a good God who gives us *“richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17) For a person to say, “Well, I’d like to be saved, but I’d hate to give up my sin,” would be sort of like, “I’d like to be healed, but I hate to give up my cancer.” How foolish! Look, friend, *when God says, “Thou shalt not,” He’s just saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.”*

I talk to another man—and this perhaps is one of the most foolish things. I speak to him. I say, “Say, wouldn’t you like to be healed?” And he says, “Yeah, Mr. Rogers, I really would.” Boy, I’m getting somewhere this time. I say, “Well now, do you believe that God said to Moses, ‘Put a serpent on a pole, and if you look, you’ll be healed?’” He says, “Yes, I believe that. Do you feel that you need to be healed?” “Yes, I do. Do you believe that God will heal you if you just look?” “I surely do.” “Oh,” I say, “I ought to win this one.” Boy, it’s wonderful. And so I say, “All right now, mister, all you have to do is just come over here and look and live.” He says, “Now, wait a minute: it’s not that simple.” I say, “Well, why not?” He says, “Well, I’m waiting on a healing feeling.” I say, “What?” He says, “You know, a healing feeling. I just had an idea that before you look

you're supposed to have a certain feeling, and when you have that feeling, you know it's your time to look."

I say, "Well now, let's go back again and read the Scriptures: 'And put a serpent on the pole, and whosoever looketh, when he looketh, shall live.'" I say, "I don't read anything about feeling." "I know, but I heard Aunt Lucy say when she got saved she was in a cotton patch and tore up a half an acre of cotton, and she was so happy. And I just believe that somehow I'm going to have some kind of a feeling. I'm going to be in church, and the preacher is going to preach, and all of the sudden I'm going to feel waves of liquid love, and I'm going to get tingly all over and goose bumps, and angels are going to play tic tac toe on my ribs, and everything is going to happen, and then I'm going to know this is my day." You'd be surprised how many people think that way.

Now, friend, if it happens to you that way, praise God! I'm not against it. People are different, and people have different emotional feelings. And I'm not making fun of people who get saved that way. Man, if you saw a bolt of lightening when you got saved, wonderful! If you had goose bumps when you got saved, praise God! I mean, if you had goose bumps when you got married, praise God. But it didn't make you any more married. What makes you married is when you say, "I do."

You see, look, friend. It's not your feeling. The Bible never said, "Feel a certain way and be saved." The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" I'm not making fun of anybody's feelings, but I tell you, if you live by feelings, you'll die by feelings. Feelings are fickle. You read the New Testament, you'll only read the word *feeling* twice in the New Testament. Both of those times it's not telling you how to be saved. Over and over and over again, the Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" (Acts 16:31) And I'm telling you, dear friend, if you honestly, sincerely, earnestly know that you've got a problem, and you believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross, I tell you on the authority of this book, if you'll come to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, Jesus will save you today. And don't you get hung up on your feelings. By the way, you start living for the Lord Jesus and following Him and getting in His Word and living in victory, and you'll have more feelings than you can handle most likely; but they're the result and they're not the cause. Don't you be waiting around today for some healing feeling.

C. It Was Elective

Now we could go on and on; but I want to tell you, dear friend, no excuse for not coming to Jesus. It is essential. But now I said it was easy. I said it was essential. But I want to say it was elective. That is, God didn't force anybody to look. Some looked, and some didn't. Some were healed, and some weren't. You see, I preach the gospel, but you're the one who must decide. I can't make you decide. Jesus Christ did not win everyone

that He talked with. The rich young ruler “*went away sorrowful,*” (Matthew 19:22) and so may some of you, because God gives you the dubious privilege of saying *yes* or saying *no*.

I want you to imagine we’re out there again in the Sinai and the hideous reptiles everywhere, and eyes are red with weeping, faces are white with fear, hands are trembling, and all over there are hurried funerals, and loved ones are being buried. And I want you to come and stand by the graveside as a mother and her ten-year-old boy whom we’ll call Jimmy are trying to scratch out a narrow, shallow grave in that rocky soil in which to bury the husband and the father of that family. And as they’re working furiously there to try and get the rocky gravel away, suddenly the little boy, Jimmy, gives a shriek, and the mother turns and she says, “Jimmy, what’s wrong?” And he says, “Look, Mommy!” And she looks down—and fastened on the tendons of that little boy’s heel is one of those hideous serpents.

She says, “Oh, my God! No, Jimmy!” And with her own heel she stomps on that serpent’s head, and she reaches down and pulls it from the heel of her boy, and she picks him up in her arms, and she says, “Oh, Jimmy, not you!” And he says, “Mommy, it hurts!” She says, “Oh, God! God, isn’t it enough that my husband is dead? God, are you going to let Jimmy die, too? Oh, God, do something! Lord, we’ve been so sinful! Oh, God, we’ve been so wicked! Oh, God, God, don’t let Jimmy die!” And she brings him and she puts him on a pallet, and already the pain is throbbing in his temples, and already his joints are beginning to stiffen, his eyes are beginning to glaze, and she’s sitting there weeping and crying.

And about that time someone comes running into the camp of Israel, and his face is aglow, and he’s shouting, “A cure! A cure! There’s a cure!” And from all the tents there come people out and they say, “What is that? What did you say?” He says, “There’s a cure! You can be cured!” One of the elders of Israel comes up and takes this boy by the lapel and looks him in the face and says, “I adjure you by God, tell me the truth: Is there a cure?” He says, “Yes, there’s a cure.” And he says, “How do you know? Does it work?” He says, “Of course it works.” He says, “How do you know?” He says, “Because I was cured.” Amen?

Listen, friend. *Not only should we be witnesses; we ought to be part of the evidence.* I’ll tell you today, I know that Jesus saves. Now you can say He doesn’t, but I know that Jesus saves. I can tell you today that Jesus transforms lives. I know, because I know what Jesus Christ has done and is doing this moment in me.

And so he says, “Yes, it works.” And so all over the camp of Israel there are instantaneous cures and rapturous shouts of joy as people are looking away to a brazen serpent on a pole. This mother is thrilled. She goes back to the tent. Her face is like the noonday sun. It’s a wreath of joy. She goes into the tents and she says, “Jimmy, Jimmy,

listen to mother! Jimmy, you don't have to die! Jimmy, Mama can't explain it all, but Jimmy, you're not going to die! God has a way for you! God, in His mercy, and it's so simple, Son, even you can do it in your sick condition. Jimmy, come to the door of the tent. All you have to do, Jimmy: you see that serpent on the pole, Jimmy? Just look. Look, Jimmy, and you'll be healed."

And I see Jimmy as he lifts his languid eyes and he says, "I see it, Mother." Just like that, instantaneously, the fever subsides, the throbbing ceases, the eyes brighten, the limbs limber. He takes a breath; the pain is gone. He sits up, he stands, he walks, he leaps, he shouts. And a mother is there leaping and shouting, and she says, "Praise God! Praise God! Praise God! Thank you, Jesus!" And she's praising the Lord, because the miracle of God's grace. And it was simple.

But I want you to see another scene. I want you to see another woman this time, and her husband has been snake-bitten, and she's so concerned that he get healed, and she goes to the tent, and she draws back the tent flap, and she goes in and she says, "Husband! Husband! Listen to me, husband! You don't have to die. God has provided a remedy." And that sick man looks up at her and says, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Are you talking about the brass serpent theory?" "Oh," she says, "Sweetheart, I'm talking about the brass serpent, but it's no theory. People are being healed and transformed. And it's not theory, husband; it works."

He says, "Now, wait a minute. I've got enough trouble. Don't mention that." "But, Darling, you could be healed." He says, "Now, lady, woman, wife, let me put it to you simple. I've got enough trouble right now without you bringing your religious superstition into our house. I'm a rational man. I've got enough sense to know there is no possible connection between my condition and some silly, stupid, twisted piece of metal on a pole. So don't mention it anymore." "But I said..." "Don't mention it again." And so he dies. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18)

You see, you can say it won't work. That's your privilege. You can say it won't do any good to trust Jesus. That's your privilege. God is not going to force it upon you. I say it's easy. I say it's essential. But I say it's elective—that "whosoever looketh..." There were some who did. There were some who refused. And in this congregation, and doubtless on this radio program, there are some who will listen and say, "I believe it and I receive it," and they'll be saved. And the others will say, "That's a lot of foolishness and religious superstition." That's your privilege. But, oh, that you would come to Jesus and be saved!

V. A Solemn Responsibility

Now, let me just say one last thing, and I'll be finished. Not only was there a simple

requirement; but, oh, dear friend, there is also a solemn responsibility. And I want to speak to those of you who are saved now. Let me tell you what this solemn responsibility is.

A. A Responsibility to Look to Jesus

Number one: You have a responsibility to look to Jesus yourself. Any of you, whether you are saved or not saved, you need to start looking to Jesus. The Bible says we're to be "*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*" (Hebrews 12:2) I want you to look to Him right now by faith. I want you to say, "Lord Jesus, I'll trust you to save me if I'm not saved; and if I am saved, I'm trusting you to keep me, I'm trusting you to lead me." I want you to look to Jesus. Just look. Look to Jesus, my friend, right now. That's your first responsibility.

B. A Responsibility to Love

Not only do you have a responsibility to look, but you have a responsibility to love. Have you ever thought about what the Lord Jesus did that you might look and live? How Jesus died in agony and blood? Brother Tommy Lane sang last week and blessed my heart with these words:

*Blessed redeemer! Precious redeemer!
Seems now I see Him, on Calvary's tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,
Blind and unheeding—dying for me.*

AVIS M. CHRISTIANSEN

Have you loved Him for that? Have you loved Him? Oh, you ought to.

C. A Responsibility to Lift

Look. You ought to love. And then you ought to lift. You see, Jesus said in John chapter 3, "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.*" He was talking about a twofold lifting up. First of all, He had to be lifted upon the cross. But we ought to lift Him up, also. That's what I'm trying to do in this message. I'm trying to lift up Jesus so you can see Him, so you can believe on Him. And it's our job to lift up Jesus. Do you want me to tell you what my job as the pastor of this church is? It's to lift up Jesus, so that you can believe in the Lord Jesus. What a solemn responsibility!

Conclusion

Do you know what some churches have gotten off into? The society for desert urban renewal. Others, the care and feeding of snakebite victims. Others, the society for the eradication of serpents. Now, you think about it. Now, friend, suppose Moses had just

said, "Well now, let's just renew the desert." That may be good, but that's not good enough. Suppose Moses said, "Let's start feeding and caring for snakebite victims." That's good, but that's not good enough. Suppose Moses said, "Let's start eradicating snakes and stamp out snakes." That's good, but that's not good enough. Oh, friend, our job, your job, my job, my responsibility, your responsibility, is to lift up Jesus.

I tell you what this world needs is Jesus.

*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

Jesus is all that this world needs.

Contentment in the Ministry

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 16, 1994

Main Scripture Text: John 3:22–30

“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

JOHN 3:29

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is No Greater Place Than God’s Will
- II. There Is No Greater Purpose Than Presenting Christ
- III. There Is No Greater Peace Than Seeing Christ Magnified

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding John chapter 3 in your Bibles, please, for our Bible study and ordination message. Tonight, I want to talk to you about “Contentment in the Ministry,” or, if we turn it around, what to do about discouragement in the ministry. Do preachers ever get discouraged? They do, indeed. As a matter of fact, many preachers have thought about resigning on Monday morning. I asked one preacher, “Do you take Mondays off?” He said, “No siree! I work on Mondays. I take another day off.” I said, “Why don’t you take Monday?” He said, “I don’t want to feel that bad on my own time.” A lot of preachers are discouraged.

I come to the Pastors’ Conference that meets here at Bellevue Baptist Church on Mondays, and I try to make it whenever I’m in the city and can come. But, it is interesting to observe the men who come to the Pastors’ Conference on a Monday. Some of them have had good Sundays, and some have had bad Sundays; and some come in bragging, and some come in dragging. And I know a lot of men who are in the ministry who are discouraged, and they’re living lives of what one called “quiet desperation.”

Well, I don’t believe that you can be much of an example if you’re living a life of discouragement, and I do believe that you are very vulnerable to the attacks of Satan if you’re living a life of discouragement. Now, what I have to say tonight will apply to Dan and David, but it will apply to every mother’s child here, because the three things that

I'm going to tell these men from the Word of God certainly are transferable and applicable to each of us—dealing with discouragement, or, to put it more positively, learning contentment in the ministry.

I want to begin reading here in John chapter 3, verse 22: *“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized”*—incidentally, parenthetically, I don't know what people do who believe in sprinkling for baptism, that John would go out to this desolate area out there by the Jordan to baptize if you baptized by sprinkling. You could baptize everybody in the city of Jerusalem with a washtub full of water if you did it by sprinkling. But John baptized out in Aenon near Salim for one reason, not because of the scenery, certainly not because of the convenience, but—*“because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized”*—literally, were immersed. That's what the word *baptized* means—*“For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him”*—that is, “John, they are following Jesus now. They are not following you like they used to”—*“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”* (John 3:22–30)

Now, here's the background. John had pointed out Jesus: *“Behold the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) Jesus had presented Himself for baptism. John said, “I'm not worthy to baptize you. I need to be baptized of you.” (Matthew 3:14) And Jesus said, “No, go ahead and baptize me to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15) And so, Jesus was baptized of John. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus as the sign of that special anointing that was upon the Lord Jesus. And John continued his ministry, and Jesus began His ministry. But now, the crowds were following Jesus; they were coming to Jesus.

Now, John had preached and promoted Jesus, and up until that time, John was a very famous and well-known preacher. As a matter of fact, the Bible says everybody, the high muckety-mucks and the rest of them, were flocking out there to see John, to hear John, and to be baptized of him. (Matthew 3:5–6) And they went all the way out into the wilderness. Now, something has happened: now the crowds are following Jesus. And John's disciples, when they saw this, they became hostile, they became

jealous, and they tried to infect John with this. And they said, “Hey, John, you know the man that you pointed out—the One that you laid your stamp of approval on? He’s getting your crowd. John, you ought to feel slighted. You ought to feel rejected. You ought to feel abused. John, you’re getting a raw deal.” And John was too big of a man to fall into that trap.

The three things that I found in this passage that have been an encouragement to me in the ministry—and I think they’ll be an encouragement to these two young men and an encouragement to all of us—are:

I. There Is No Greater Place Than God’s Will

Number one: John knew this—that there is no greater place than God’s will. Now, get that in your heart and mind: whoever you are or wherever you are, there is no greater place than God’s will. Now, John pointed that out when there were some who were thinking that Jesus somehow had the best place and John, therefore, the lesser place. And John said in verse 27: “*John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*” (John 3:27) Now, what was John saying? John was saying that God is ultimately in charge. He’s the One who makes the assignments, and, therefore, we must recognize the sovereignty of God in the life of His servants and in our ministry.

Now, since God assigns one man here and God assigns another man here, and no man has anything except what God has given him, those of us in the ministry are not in competition. We are in a pilgrimage together, not in a race against one another. We are not rivals in the ministry. What is the highest place that a man can fill? Is it to be the pastor of a big church? No, I was as much in the will of God when I pastored a small church as I am pastoring a large church and, may I say, just as happy. There’s something wrong with a man if he gets his joy out of the size of the crowd or the size of a building. I rejoice in it, but I don’t get my joy in it. And I was just as happy pastoring the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida.

I wish I could take you to the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida. I wish you could see that church. I was a nineteen-year-old boy pastoring that church, and God bless those dear folks who endured that preacher. That church was made out of cinderblock—unpainted, had a cement floor. Our pews were not the opera seats that we have here. As a matter of fact, they were two by eights—a two by eight for a seat and a two by eight for a back, with iron clamps holding them together. Cement floor, double hung sash windows with the frames unpainted, rough timber in the ceiling—well, in the roof, the trusses; there was no ceiling—bare light bulbs hanging down. We didn’t have a secretary. We didn’t have a typewriter. We didn’t have an office. We didn’t have a bathroom. We didn’t have running water. But we had Jesus, and God blessed in that

little church. I was so happy to get there in my car and drive around to pick up the kids for Sunday school, and come back and sweep out the church, and get up and preach the message, and do what I could do, and baptize the folks that got saved in the creek—just had a wonderful time, and just as happy as I am tonight serving the Lord.

The highest place is the will of God. You can't get higher than that. It doesn't matter where you are—if you're out of the will of God, you're failing. But if you're in the will of God, no matter where you are, you have to step down to be the President of the United States. They tried to say, "Well, John, look—He is doing more than you are." John said, "*A man [can't] receive [anything], except [it's] given him [of God].*" (John 3:27)

I pastored another little church, Dan, David, and it was in Waveland, Mississippi. Now, Waveland, Mississippi—if you know where Bay Saint Louis is—is the suburb of Bay Saint Louis. But Bay Saint Louis, at that time, was not exactly a thriving metropolis. And it was down on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, and our church building was just about the size of this platform—really, right here; just about that size. I imagine we could pack in a hundred people by putting the chairs there—ten rows of ten on a chair. And God blessed again. I stayed there during my seminary time. I was in New Orleans for about four years furthering my education there in the seminary, and a church called me to come to Florida. It was the Parkview Baptist Church.

Actually, I got two letters in my post office there in Waveland. One was on top of the other one, and both of those letters said, "Adrian Rogers, we've heard of you. We want you to come and be our pastor." Now, those two letters—one was on top of the other, and both of them said, "We feel it's God's will." Well, I couldn't pastor both churches. One church was in Melbourne, Florida, and the other was in Fort Pierce, Florida. And I prayed over it, and I wrote them both back and said, "Well, thank you, but I don't feel inclined that way." These were both very small churches. That wasn't my prime reason for not feeling inclined, but it was something that was certainly in my mind—both of them with a hundred people in Sunday school. And the church in Fort Pierce wrote back. They said, "No, we know you're God's man for this church, and we want you to come. You pray some more." And so, I prayed some more, and I told Joyce, "I really believe it's God's will that I go to Fort Pierce, Florida." So, I had to tell my church there on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi that I was going to Fort Pierce, Florida. And I was getting out of seminary, and it seemed a logical transition for me to leave that church, which was really a seminary church, and go on to begin a true enough fulltime ministry. I loved the people there on the Gulf Coast, and believe it or not, they loved me. But it was time to resign.

I had been there, and I said, "Now, how can I do this so it will sound really spiritual?" So, I thought about it. And I stood there on a Sunday morning, and I told them, "Ladies and gentlemen, it's been wonderful to be the pastor of this church, but God has called

me to Florida. And there's a church there in Florida—they've called me." And here's the way I said it: "A nail-pierced hand has pointed me to Florida, and I must follow." Doesn't that sound spiritual? I mean, what could you do about a nail-pierced hand that's pointing? "A nail-pierced hand has pointed"—I said, "They can't argue with that, you know? I am going." Well, there was weeping and moaning at the bar. But anyway, that was on Sunday morning, and I had not told the church in Fort Pierce that I would come. But they had asked me to come, so I knew I could tell them and it would be a done deal.

But when I got home after having resigned, the phone was ringing. Now, Fort Pierce is a small, little town in Florida, with a very small church in that town. My phone was ringing, and I picked up the phone. And they said, "Are you Adrian Rogers?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Well, I'm Mr. Graham, and I serve on the Pulpit Committee of the First Baptist Church in one of the largest cities, if not the largest city, in the state of Florida." And he said, "We've heard of you. We want you to come and be our pastor." Well, I thought, "Dear God, I'll never get an opportunity like this—to be the pastor of a church like that." He told me about the minister of music, and he told me about the minister of education, and he told me about this thing and that thing. And then, he wanted to start telling me about the salary, and I said, "Look, mister, I'm sorry, but God won't let me talk to you. Goodbye," and hung up. And God could not have put it in bigger letters flashed across that room where I was standing: this was a test and only a test. You see, what I'd told those people was I knew the will of God here. And then, what kind of a man would I have been to turn so quickly because something else that seemed better came along?

I never had a sweeter, more wonderful time than at Parkview Baptist Church in Fort Pierce, Florida. I would not take anything for the joy, and the love, and the fellowship that we had there. The highest place is not the biggest place. The highest place is not the smallest place. The highest place is not the easiest place or the hardest place. The highest place is simply doing what God tells you to do. "*A man [has] nothing, except it be given him [of God].*" (John 3:27) I rejoice in what God has given us here. But I can tell you that, though it would break my heart to sever friendships, I would not bat an eyelash to move to a very small or insignificant work, or to begin a new work, or to go overseas, or to become an evangelist, or to do anything that I felt was the will of God. Now, that may be an idle boast, but I don't think it is. Friend, there is no higher place than the will of God.

And so, that doesn't mean that all of us have the same gifts. We don't have. God gives each man different gifts. God has given David some gifts He hasn't given Dan, and God's given Dan some gifts that He hasn't given David. And God's given both of them some gifts He hasn't given me, and God's given me some gifts He hasn't given them. "*A man [has] nothing, except it [is] given him [of God].*" (John 3:27) And that's the

reason that you need to be very careful that you don't criticize these young men or you don't criticize me for not having an ability in some particular area.

How often creatures will criticize! They say, "Well, you know, he's a good Bible teacher, but..." or, "He has a wonderful personality, but..." or, "He works well with older people, but..." or, "He knows a lot about management, but..." We need to understand this: don't expect the pastor to excel in every area. Different men are going to be strong in different areas. Sometimes we get the idea here that a preacher is supposed to be a combination of a great Bible teacher, an evangelist, compassionate pastor, inspiring administrator, and a shrewd businessman. I've often thought some pulpit committees want to get a man who's a combination of Billy Graham, and Billy Gaither, and Billy Gothard. Just call him Billy. No preacher has all of the giftings. And the congregations need to understand that, and the preacher himself needs to admit it.

I've seen young preachers, David, try to present themselves and oversell themselves to a congregation. And, in a sense, he paints himself into a corner. If he tries to act like God, people will blame him when he doesn't perform like God. We have what we have. Whoever we are and whatever we are is a gift of God. "*A man [has] nothing, except it be given him [of God].*" (John 3:27) Therefore, we need to understand what we can expect of ourselves. Others need to know what to expect and what not to expect. And there's absolutely no room for jealousy or envy in the ministry or in any other area of life. "No man has anything except what's given him of God." (John 3:27) Now, that's the first thing I want to say: there's no greater place than the will of God. God is sovereign as He administrates the ministry.

II. There Is No Greater Purpose Than Presenting Christ

Now, here's the second thing: not only is there no greater place than the will of God; there is no greater purpose than presenting Christ. Look, if you will, in verses 28 and following. John is still answering; he says, "*Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom*"—he's talking about Jesus and the Church. The Church is the Bride, and Christ is the Bridegroom—"*but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*" (John 3:28–29)

John had an awareness of his call, and his call was that he was to present the Lord Jesus Christ. John saw himself as a friend of the Bridegroom. Now, what does that mean? Well, a friend of the bridegroom is kind of like the best man of our day, except he did more in that day. He prepared for the wedding feast, the friend of the bridegroom did. The friend of the bridegroom would send out invitations. The friend of the bridegroom would prepare the bridal chamber. He would take the bride and escort her

to the wedding. He would deliver her to the bridal chamber. He would be the protector. And when he brought her to the bridal chamber and heard the bridegroom's voice, he would greatly rejoice that he had presented the bride to the bridegroom. John said, "That's what I'm here to do. I am a friend of the Groom."

In the ministry, you'd better find your joy in presenting people to Jesus Christ, not in budgets, not in buildings, not in organizations, not in numbers, not in honors, because if you do, sooner or later you're going to be disappointed or discouraged. We have some wonderful numbers and some wonderful statistics here at Bellevue Baptist Church. But I tell our deacons when we meet in deacons' meetings, when baptisms are high and Sunday school attendance is high, and all of these things, thank God for these things. But we don't find out joy in these things. If you live by numbers, you die by numbers. Friend, if those are the marks of God's blessings, are you going to say that God is not blessing somebody who's out of here in Mount Zion Number Two and Rural Route Four, not having all of these things? No, listen, your joy is presenting Jesus to people. There's no greater purpose. We have so often heard the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

One of the things that I love about John the Baptist is this: he was a Jesus man. For he said, "*He must increase, [and] I must decrease.*" (John 3:30) As a matter of fact, they were talking about John the Baptist over there in the Gospel of John, in the tenth chapter. And they said of John the Baptist that "*John did no miracle.*" (John 10:41) You know, John never performed a miracle. Yet Jesus said of John, "There was not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28) That's a pretty good compliment when you consider who said it—"not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28) But in John chapter 10, it says that John never did a miracle. (John 10:41) John never opened blind eyes and unstopped deaf ears. He never straightened withered limbs. He never multiplied loaves. He didn't raise the dead. John never did a miracle. But that verse goes on to say, "*But all things...John [spoke] of [Jesus] were true. And many believed on [Jesus]*" (John 10:41–42) because of John's words. I'd rather have that said at my graveside than to say, one day, "I raised the dead," "I healed the lame," or "I fed the multitudes."

The thing that will discourage you in the ministry is this: if you ever get your mind, your heart, off the main thing, which is presenting men, women, boys, and girls to Jesus Christ. Fall in love with Jesus. Keep a soul winner's heart. And if you ever get discouraged, just go out and win somebody to Jesus. If you ever get down, just get the focus again and say that "He must increase." And keep your focus upon Jesus. If you get your focus upon people, if you get your focus upon buildings, if you get your focus upon programs, sooner or later you're going to be dragging bottom. There is no higher place than the will of God. There is no greater purpose than presenting the Lord Jesus

Christ. I want to encourage you men to do this: just keep your eyes on Jesus.

III. There Is No Greater Peace Than Seeing Christ Magnified

Then, the third thing I want to say—and we’re going to have a laying on of hands—there is no greater peace than seeing Christ magnified. Look, if you will, in verse 29, the last part: John said, “[I] rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:29–30) Jealousy and discomfort and discouragement come when we get our fulfillment from achievements and possessions rather than Jesus. And not everybody’s going to appreciate you. Not everybody appreciates me. Does that amaze you? Certainly amazes me—I can’t understand why they wouldn’t. But not everybody’s going to appreciate you. Not everybody’s going to like your preaching, your style.

¶ Back in the Depression, a man went into the barbershop for a haircut. He was a preacher. And he told the barber—he said, “Look,” he said, “a haircut’s only fifty cents, but I don’t have fifty cents.” The barber said, “Well, that’s all right, preacher. Get up here. I’ll cut your hair. I’ll come hear you preach a sermon, and we’ll call it square.” The preacher said, “Well, I don’t have any fifty-cent sermons.” He said, “That’s okay. I’ll come twice.” ¶

Not everybody’s going to appreciate you. But, you know, just absolutely lock in on Jesus. There are times when I preach that, well, I just don’t think it’s received, you know. And I think, “Well, when I get home, Joyce will say it was good.” She just goes on cooking lunch and never says a word. We used to have a dog, and Tony wouldn’t even wag her tail at me sometimes. But then, you know what I do? I say, “Lord, was that your word?” And I preach it to Jesus. If it sounds good to Him and if I feel good telling Him about it, I can just feel good about it. And you say, “Lord, if you’re pleased—if you’re pleased.”

¶ There was a violinist who did a great concert. And the people stood and cheered, but the violinist stood aside with his head down. One of the stage managers said, “Go out and take a bow. You did wonderful. The people are so pleased.” He said, “Not all of them. You see that man sitting down there with his head down? He’s my teacher. If he’s not pleased, I’m not pleased.” ¶

And, you know, it really doesn’t matter how many people brag on you if you displease Jesus. But, you know, you can take that and turn it around: if He’s pleased, it really doesn’t matter what they think. They may not like you. John ended up in prison. But the cure for discouragement in the ministry is to see that there is no higher place than the will of God. There is no greater purpose than presenting Christ. There is no greater peace and joy than seeing Him magnified and saying, “*He must increase, [and] I*

must decrease.” (John 3:30)

David, we were talking about your church and pastoring country churches. Brother, they'll teach you more in one year than that seminary will teach you in three, I'll guarantee you. One young man came to a church about the size of yours, and the lady said, “Well, young man, you'll have quite a job trying to please all of us.” And he said, “Well, madam, I don't mean any offense to you, but my job is not going to be to try to please all of you; I'm going to try to please Jesus. And if I please Him, that ought to be good enough for all of you.” But whether it is or whether it isn't, you just say, “*He must increase, [and] I must decrease.*” (John 3:30) Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Conclusion

For the time of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the New Testament there was not a discouraging note. Get your eyes on buildings, and budgets, and people, and programs, and you're going to get discouraged. But there's no greater place than God's will. There is no greater purpose than presenting Christ—no greater peace than seeing Him magnified.

I'm going to ask these men to come and put the chairs out here for a laying on of hands. Would you do that, please? And let's put them down here tonight. I'm going to ask these men to kneel. I'm going to ask their wives to stand by them. I'm going to ask you men on the Ordination Council, if you will, to come and line up on this side and to come across here for the laying on of hands. David and Dan, would you kneel here at these chairs? And we're going to ask your precious wives to stand by your side. Gentleman, if you'll come. Brother Dale, if you'll lead.

What do you do during the laying on of hands? You pray. Thank God for these men. Ask God's blessing on them. And you don't necessarily have to keep your head bowed; you may want to watch what's going on, but keep a prayer in your heart.

Gentlemen, would you kneel? And Dan, if you'll begin? “Lord, we thank you for tonight. Lord, we thank you that you still call men to the gospel ministry. Oh, we pray for these two men. I pray for my son, and I pray for Dave, that they might be faithful. We want you to fill them with your sweet Spirit, and that they'd want to be filled all the time. Have them be quick to realize when there is sin in their life and be willing to confess it. May they stay faithful to you, and may they love their families and serve the ministry because of the One who lives in them. Also, strengthen them in their inner man, that they might know your will in all matters. Bless them in their present churches, right now, that they might preach and teach the Word as they should, that they'd always be getting a word from you. Oh, we love you tonight, and we praise you for these two men and their families. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.”

Amen and amen. Gentlemen, if you'll rise and come up here? Ladies, you may be

seated for just a moment, if you will. P. J. Scott, who is the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Olive Branch, and one of my dear friends, and a man that I admire and thank God for, is going to come and, on behalf of this church and in the name of Christ, present these Bibles to these men. Brother Scott, if you'll come over and use of this microphone?

“Thank you, Pastor. I've shared this with Scotty, but about twelve years ago I visited your Pollard Activities Building and talked at length with Scotty. We were in the process of beginning to build one, and I asked him about the ministry of recreation—who to call as Recreation Activities Leader. I had no earthly idea that he was raising me one. Dan has been a great blessing in our lives already in our church—he and Jody. And we're so delighted that God is giving us the opportunity to work with him and to see God just develop him and mature him. And David, I know God's going to use you there in Okolona, and we pray God's blessing on you. Let me just commend to you young men one of my favorite verses of Scripture. Nahum chapter 1, in verse 7, says, *'The LORD is good, [He is the] strong hold in the day of trouble; and he [knows those who] trust in him.'* (Nahum 1:7) God bless you.”

Thank you, Brother Scott. And Dan, I want to present this ordination certificate to you. It's signed by the names of those men on the council, and it is a reminder for us to pray for you and you to pray for us. And for you, David. God bless you both. We will keep you in our hearts and in our prayers. Praise the Lord. You'll be seated, if you would, for a moment.

Tonight, before we go, it's fitting that we give an invitation. If you are here tonight and if you'd like to know Christ as your personal Savior: salvation is a gift; you cannot earn it. But when you receive Christ by faith, you're saved. The Bible puts it simply, purely, wonderfully, excitingly: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) Believe that He took your sins to the cross, that He paid your sin debt, that God raised Him from the dead and gave assurance to all that He's the Son of God. Receive Him into your heart as Lord and Master, and every sin will be forgiven. He'll send His Holy Spirit into you, and when you die, He'll take you to heaven.

Now, if you want that, we'll be happy to guide you in that decision tonight. But we're going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. And your coming forward is your way of saying, “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and tonight, I'm giving my heart to Him.” Others of you who are saved and need a church home and would like to come and place your membership here—if you believe as we believe and want to be a faithful growing member, lovingly we invite you to come and tell one of the ministers that you want to place your membership here.

Let's stand together as we sing. Brother Jim, you lead us. 

The Way to Worship

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 30, 1987

Main Scripture Text: John 4:1–24

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” John 4:23

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, please, and turn to John chapter 4. Tonight, we want to be talking about worship, and “The Way to Worship.” And this is a long chapter. I wish tonight that we had the time, the space, to read it all, and comment on every verse. Indeed, we do not. But we’re going to begin in verse 1: *“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)”—that is, His disciples did baptize—“he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.”* (John 4:1–4)

Now, let me just stop right there and say that when “[Jesus] must needs go through

Samaria,” that was not because of geography. Now Jesus did not have to go the way that He was going, to Galilee through Samaria. If He had taken the easy route, if He had wanted to take the quick route, He would have followed the bed of the river Jordan. It’s comparatively simple and easy, even though that’s a difficult way, too. The trip is about sixty miles along the banks of Jordan. But when you go through Samaria, you go over a torturous mountain route. I’ve traveled it many times, because we wanted to get to the place that this story tells about, because we wanted to be there at Jacob’s well. Jesus went through those mountains, sharp and rocky. And He also, in order to go that way, went through a very hostile territory. He did not go by chance, however, when the Bible says, *“He must needs go.” “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”*: (Psalm 37:23) how much more the steps of our own Lord?

And so, verse 5: *“[He] cometh...to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there.”* And, incidentally, Jacob’s well is still there. It’s one of the most authentic spots in all the Holy Land. If you go to the Holy Land with us some time, God willing, we’ll stop there, and you can drink from this same well. It is still there. It’s a very deep well. Jacob’s well was there. *“Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well:”—*that is, there’s a curbing around the well. That curbing is still there, just about high enough for a person to sit on. And Jesus is sitting there on the well. And I can just picture that in my mind right now, because I have been there—*“and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.”* (John 4:5–7)

And, incidentally, that’s always a good way to open a soul-winning conversation: ask a person to do something for you. As a matter of fact, if you go into a home to visit somebody, and they’re a little hostile to you, one of the best things you can do is say, *“Would you give me a drink of water, please?”* And you know what will happen? That woman’s instincts as a hostess will take over, and she’ll say, *“Sure.”* She’ll go get you a drink of water. And when she serves it to you, there’s a completely different relationship there. You’re no longer just someone bursting into the home; you have become a guest in that home. And our Lord, of course, was the master at dealing with people and breaking down hostility.

And so Jesus said, *“Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat)”*—the word there literally means “food.” *“Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee*

living water”—actually, not just a well that you have to draw from, but a spring that bubbles up. *“The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:10–24)

I. A Troubled Woman

This is the story of a wayward woman who became a liberated lady.

A. She Was a Slave to Her Sin

Now what had happened is this. Jesus is there by the well of Sychar, and this woman comes out. She is a fallen woman. She is a destitute, depraved woman. She is the finished product of the devil’s art. The devil had whispered into her ear that he was going to satisfy her; but, indeed, he deceived her. And her burned-out life was a monument to Satan’s lies. This poor woman was a slave to sin. She had gone from husband to husband to husband to husband—from affair to affair—and she had become nothing but a faded flower living with a man now without even the benefits of a marriage ceremony. Every one of her so-called love affairs had turned to dust. And now, there she is, degraded and dirty.

B. She Was a Slave to Her Sorrow

Not only was she a slave to her sin, but she was a slave to her sorrow. Here was a woman—a troubled woman. You can just read a little between the lines and find out that

she had, indeed, a broken heart. She'd been discarded by these men who had used her body. She'd been cast aside like a worn-out garment. Sin has its thrills, but it has no lasting joy. Sin fascinates, and then assassinates. Sin thrills, and then it kills. And here she is, a woman with her sadness, with her emptiness, with her disillusionment. *The cup of sin is sweet, but the dregs are very bitter.*

The strange thing about this woman is that she was to some degree a religious woman. She liked to talk about religion. She had religious ideas. She was the one who talked about Jesus being a prophet, first of all. She was the one who brought in the discussion about where men ought to worship. She had religion, but it had not worked for her. She had a form of godliness, but she'd not known the power thereof. (2 Timothy 3:5) She was like countless thousands in Shelby County who are members of some church, but who are in the grip of sin, and whose lives are haunted with emptiness.

C. Barriers Jesus Had to Overcome

Now Jesus came to set her free, and Jesus had some good news for a bad lady. And in order for Jesus to talk to her, Jesus had to overcome a lot of barriers. And, today, when we go out and win souls, we have to overcome the same barriers.

1. The Barrier of Race

Jesus had to overcome the barrier of race. This woman said, "I perceive that you're a Jew. We're Samaritans. The Jews don't have any dealings with the Samaritans." (John 4:9) Now the Samaritans were a mongrel race; they were kind of half-breeds. The ten tribes had been carried away into captivity, and some were left. The weak, the feeble, the crippled were left when the ten tribes of the north were carried away. These intermarried with the Canaanites, and so they were half-Jews and half-Canaanites—they were intermarried. And the Jews wouldn't have anything to do with them. Why, a Jew would not even use the same utensil that a Samaritan had used! He wouldn't ordinarily drink from a vessel that a Samaritan would handle. And yet Jesus said, "Give me a drink of water." (John 4:7) And this woman said, "You're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan." (John 4:9)

Now, listen, friend. I want to tell you this about Jesus. Jesus breaks down racial barriers. Jesus is not the Jewish Savior. He's not the Gentile Savior. He's not the white man's Savior. He's not the black man's Savior. He's not just the Western man's Savior. He is the Savior of the whole wide world. And Jesus broke down this racial barrier. The Bible says in Acts 10:43, "*To [Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*"

2. The Barrier of Resentment

But not only did Jesus have to overcome this barrier of race; He also had to

overcome this barrier of resentment. You can almost hear a snarl in her voice. Listen to it in verse 9: *“How is it that thou, being in a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?”* (John 4:9) There’s a bristling hostility here. This woman has a battle with bitterness. She’s been mistreated by the Jews so many times, and now she herself has an antipathy, a hostility, a prejudice against Jews. She felt that everybody was just like the last person that she met.

And do you know today there are people who have a prejudice against Jesus? And do you know why they have a prejudice against Jesus and a resentment against Jesus because they think of us? That woman had a resentment against Jews and against Jesus because she thought of the other Jews of that day. Dear friend, I’m afraid today that there are some people who stay away from Jesus, not because of Jesus, but because of us. You’re the best Christian somebody knows. You’re the best argument for or against the Lord Jesus.

3. The Barrier of Reputation

Jesus had to break down the barrier of race. He had to break down the barrier of resentment. He had to break down the barrier of her reputation. This woman was a fallen woman. Verses 16 and 17: *“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.”* (John 4:16–17) Jesus said, *“That’s right. You’ve had five husbands.”* (John 4:18) She had a bad name. She was an outcast. That’s the reason she came when she came at the hottest part of the day: because other women came to draw water early in the morning, late in the evening. They wouldn’t have anything to do with her. But Jesus loved her anyway. Your reputation, whether it is good or bad, does not stand between—should not stand between—you and salvation.

Now in John 4, you have the salvation of a fallen woman who was living a life of sin with an unmarried man who’d been divorced five times. In John 3, you have the story of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. If there was ever a self-righteous man, it was Nicodemus. And the Bible, in back-to-back chapters, tells us how both of these were saved. And I want to put it down big and plain and straight tonight: *there is no one so bad he cannot be saved, and no one so good he need not be saved.* And I believe that our God put these chapters side by side that we might understand this.

4. The Barrier of Religion

Now, not only did He overcome those barriers; He overcame the greatest barrier, which was the barrier of religion. Right in the middle of this thing this woman brings up the religious argument. She says in verse 20, *“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you worship in Jerusalem.”* (John 4:20) There was Mount Gerizim there, and that

was where the Samaritans had their altar. The Jews had their temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. And so she says, “Which place?” It’s almost as if she says, “Which denomination is the best denomination?”

Have you ever been out soul winning and somebody wants to bring up the denominational issue? They say, “Well, you know, I’m a Baptist,” or, “I’m a Methodist,” or, “I’m a Church of Christ,” or, “I’m an Episcopalian.” Friend, you can be all of those, and none of those, and still go to hell. And I’m a Baptist, and I’m not ashamed of being a Baptist. But, friend, I get a little perturbed with these people who think more of being a Baptist than they think of loving the Lord Jesus. I think I’ve met some of them. They call themselves “dye-in-the-wool Baptists.” I’d rather be a washed-in-the-blood Christian.

She brings up the denominational issue. And the Lord just has to keep on breaking down barriers, breaking down barriers, breaking down barriers to get to her. Finally, He gets across to her. It’s not a matter of race; it’s not a matter of face; it’s not a matter of place—it’s a matter of grace.

II. A Thirsting Woman

Now, here was a troubled woman, but Jesus knew that she was also a thirsty woman. Look in verse 10: “*Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*” (John 4:10) This woman had a thirsty soul. And Jesus said to her, “I am what you need.”

A. Jesus Is Satisfying Water

Jesus is satisfying water. Notice He says in verses 13 and following, “*Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.*” (John 4:13–14) This woman, beyond the shadow of a doubt, had an insatiable thirst. Why do you think she had gone from husband to husband? Why do you think she had gone from one sordid affair to another? She was trying to find satisfaction for her longing soul.

Those people that you’ll work with tomorrow that snort coke, those people that gamble, those people that read *Playboy*, those people that curse, those people who exult in their immorality—don’t criticize them; pity them. They’re so thirsty. I mean, but for the grace of God, you’d be trying to find satisfaction in those things, too. I mean, everybody wants to be satisfied. Jesus knew that this poor woman had an insatiable thirst.

A man was found in a cheap hotel room. He had squandered a virtual fortune in search of peace. And before he died, he scribbled these words on a piece of paper and

left them lying by his bed:

*I've tried in vain a thousand ways
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;
But what I need, the Bible says,
Is ever, only Jesus.*

—JAMES PROCTOR

I don't know whether he found Jesus or not. I hope he did. Jesus, my friend, is satisfying water.

B. Jesus Is Springing Water

And, praise God, Jesus is springing water. Notice again in verse 14: *“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”* (John 4:14) What is He talking about? What is He talking about now? Jesus is saying that now you can have the well on the inside: *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...[and] out of his [innermost being] shall flow [a river] of living water.”* (John 7:37–38)

It's interesting, if you'll read on down this chapter—I think about verse 28—this woman leaves her water pot. (John 4:28) She gets so excited she leaves the water pot there at the well. Well, in a real sense, she didn't need that anymore. She had the well inside her.

Now, folks, there are a lot of folks like that who are trying to satisfy themselves. They're going from Bible conference to Bible conference trying to get their cup filled, trying to get their water pot filled. I'll tell you, you get the well on the inside—that's what you really need: to have Jesus on the inside. We used to sing a little chorus: “It's bubbling; it's bubbling in my soul.”

III. A Transformed Woman

The third and final thing I want you to see tonight—and this is the most important: not only a troubled woman; and not only a thirsting woman; but I want you to notice a transformed woman. This woman was changed completely, because Jesus taught her what worship is all about. She says in verse 20, *“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers...”*—if you don't mind underscoring your Bible, just underscore that—*“the true worshippers”*—not all worship is true worship—*“when the*

true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:20–24)

Listen to your pastor tonight. The aim of everything, the purpose of everything, the highest attainment, the greatest good—if we were in a business, we'd say, "the bottom line"—is the worship of God. Do you believe that? Listen. The aim of salvation is not merely that sin be forgiven. That's wonderful, but that's not the aim of salvation. The aim of salvation is not that you get satisfied and have peace. That's wonderful, but that's not the aim of salvation. The aim of salvation is not that you escape hell—that's wonderful; not that you go to heaven—that's grand; not that you serve the Lord—that's glorious. But, my dear friend, the bottom—bottom—line is that you worship God. This is what God wants. This is what it's all about. Therefore, nothing should take priority over worship. If you're too busy to worship, you're too busy: you're doing something you ought not to do. You were made for worship, and worship was made for you.

A. The Reason for Worship

Why should you worship? Well, the Bible says in verse 23, the Father seeks your worship. (John 4:23) Now, why does God seek your worship? Does worship add anything to God's changeless glory? Do you think that your worship makes Him any more glorious? You can't make Him more glorious, for He says, "*I am the LORD, I change not.*" (Malachi 3:6) Well, is God some sore of a celestial egotist who constantly wants to be bragged on, wants to be stroked, wants to be praised? Does God have some sort of an insecurity complex? Is that why God wants to be worshiped: to have His ego boosted? No! God is completely all-glorious and self-sufficient. God does not want worship for what worship does for God, but what worship does for you.

Oh, my friend, listen. Listen. Worship changes you like nothing else. It is a known fact that we become like what we worship. A few Sundays ago, I preached on idolatry, and I told you that first of all a man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. That's true in a negative sense; it's true in a positive sense—that when we worship God as we ought, we become like Him. Let me give you a verse—2 Corinthians 3:18: "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" We would be better if we worshiped better. To worship Him as we ought is to become as we are. There is no way that you can become like Jesus without worshiping Jesus. "*The Father seeketh such to worship him.*" (John 4:23)

B. The Reality of Worship

Now, that's the reason. Let me talk to you about the reality of worship. Look again in

verse 23. He's talking here about true worship, not false worship. Worship is not necessarily church services. You can sit in a church service and never worship. Worship is not primarily Bible reading. You can read your Bible and not worship. When I went to seminary and was studying some, I was doing everything but worship when I was reading the Bible. You can even pray and not worship. Jesus spoke of some who prayed and they thought they were heard for their much speaking, but they were not heard. (Matthew 6:7) What is real worship? Real worship is the adoring contemplation of God through Jesus Christ. John MacArthur said that "worship is all that we are responding to all that He is." That's beautiful. That's what worship is. All that we are—with my whole heart, with my whole being, with my mind, my emotion, my will, my strength—all of it responding to all that God is. The word *worship* and *worth-ship* go together: we worship Him because He is worthy of worth, our worship.

Some people don't understand the difference between prayer and thanksgiving and worship. Let me illustrate. Here's a woman in a burning building. A fireman comes to rescue her at peril of his own life. Through danger, heroically, he goes up the ladder. He puts this beautiful girl in his arms and carries her down the ladder and saves her life. Later, she goes to look him up to say to him personally, face to face, "Thank you for saving my life." They get acquainted better. That chemistry is there. They fall in love. Later, they get married. Now, when she was standing in the window, and the flames were burning, and she was saying, "Help me! Help me!" that's like prayer. When she went later on to meet him and to thank him, that's like praise. But when she fell in love with him, and married him, and gave him her all, and received his all, that's like worship—that's like worship.

Thank God for prayer that says, "Lord, help me." Thank God for praise that says, "Thank you, Jesus." But thank God—thank God—for worship that says, "Lord, you are my all and in all; and, Lord, I share my life with you on the most intimate terms."

C. The Requirement for Worship

Now, let me talk to you, finally, not only about the reason for worship, and the reality of worship, but let me talk to you here about the requirement for worship. Notice here that our Lord Jesus says that we "*must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:24) Do you see it—verse 23? "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:23) And as I meditated on that verse, I said to myself, there are three indispensable requirements for worship. The very first is that God must become your Father: you must worship the Father. And in order for God to become your Father, you must have a new birth: you must be born into the kingdom of God. And you cannot come to the Father but by Jesus Christ: for Jesus said

in John 14:6, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

1. You Must Worship the Father

Friend, I’m going to tell you something. In my estimation, anybody who worships any other way except through Jesus is not worshipping in truth. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) True worship is through the Lord Jesus Christ. You must be born again. The only way you can come to God is through the Son. You must worship the Father.

2. You Must Worship in Spirit

But not only, dear friend, must there be a new birth; not only must you be born again; in order to truly worship the Lord, you must be Spirit-filled. You must worship the Father in spirit—in spirit. *“The flesh profiteth nothing.”* (John 6:63)

Worship is not just simply your singing songs. Two people can sing the same song on the same night in the same church: one will sing in the flesh, and one will sing in the Spirit; one will worship, and one will not. Two people can pray: one will pray words, and the other will pray in the Spirit. There is no worship apart from the Spirit. True worship is the Spirit of God in you welling up and glorifying God. You cannot worship God apart from the aid, the help, the power of the Holy Spirit. And God’s Holy Spirit fills you when you surrender with all of your heart and life.

Now, folks, I don’t know how to test your life to know whether you’re Spirit-filled or not; but the way I test my life is this: if I find myself just constantly praising the Lord, just constantly full of joy; if Jesus is real to me, and praise is the mark of my life, it’s evidence to me that I am Spirit-filled—praising the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, *“He shall not speak of himself... He shall glorify me.”* (John 16:13–14) Worship the Father in spirit. You must be born again. You must be filled with the Spirit.

3. You Must Worship in the Word

And then, thirdly, the Word of God must dwell in you richly, if you would worship, because you worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Word of God is the basis of all true worship. If you worship in the Spirit without the Word, you will become a fanatic. If you worship in the truth without the Spirit, you’ll become a Pharisee. But if you worship in spirit and in truth, you’ll become a true worshiper.

Conclusion

If you worship in the spirit without the truth, sooner or later, you’ll become a fanatic. If you worship in the truth without the spirit, sooner or later, you’ll become a Pharisee. But if you worship in spirit and in truth, you’ll worship the Father in such a way as to get

the smile of heaven.

Satisfaction for the Thirsty Soul

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 25, 1980

Main Scripture Text: John 4:1–30

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

JOHN 4:10

Outline

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Introduction

In John chapter 4 we're going to see something and study something that will help you to meet a very real need that you have. I don't know all about you, but I know one thing about you: You have a need in your life, you have a thirst in your life, that can only be satisfied a certain way.

Have you ever been out perhaps working in the garden, or bicycling, or playing touch football, or cutting the grass, or something, and you're very thirsty? And there will be a box of soft drinks; I won't mention any brand names, but you drink one, and it tastes so good, and it just seems to hit the spot; and you go back out to your activity, and after a while you're aware that you're thirsty again. And you go for another one, and you drink that, and it seems so good, and it seems to satisfy. Then after a while, you're thirsty again. And then you say, "I know what I need." And you go back to that good ol' Adam's ale, that water, and you get you a big tall glass of water, and you drink it, and that satisfies you.

Now, why? Well, if you look at that bottle of soda pop, or whatever it is that you've

been drinking, you'll see that it says "artificially colored," and "artificially flavored," and for most of us, "artificially sweetened," and there's just something there that doesn't have that touch of authenticity and reality.

Now there are a lot of us who are trying to satisfy and to slake our thirst with things that are artificially colored, things that are artificially sweetened, and artificially flavored, and what we need is the water of life; we need to learn how to worship God in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) I'm going to be speaking tonight on this subject: "Satisfaction for the Thirsty Soul."

Now, look here in John chapter 4, verse 1: *"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."* See, they had the problem of prejudice way back then.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

And then she starts to ask a question about her true thirst: *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh,*

and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.” (John 4:1–30)

And we'll stop the reading right there, but I think many of you know that story. But you need to hear it again. This is the story of a thirsty woman; and she didn't really know what she was thirsty for, and so she was trying to satisfy her thirst in all kinds of ways. And she had gone from husband to husband, from sexual escapade to sexual escapade, trying to satisfy the thirst that she had within her. She was longing, searching, seeking, and she really did not know what was bothering her on the inside, and why she couldn't settle down, and why nothing seemed to satisfy her. Of course Jesus knew that down deep she had a thirst that only God could satisfy. This poor woman, our heart goes out to her. She had been married five times. If she had been alive today, they probably would have sent her to Hollywood and given her an Oscar for her performance. But here was a woman that the Lord Jesus loved in spite of her sin. And so Jesus spoke to her a wonderful, marvelous lesson about the way to worship.

And, oh, if you learn it tonight, you're going to learn something wonderful about your own heart, because as I've said by way of intro, I don't know all about you, but I know this much about you: God created you to worship Him; and until you learn how to worship Him, truly reverence Him, truly praise Him, truly love Him, truly adore Him, truly have communion with Him, there will always be in your heart and in your spirit a God-shaped vacuum. So I want you to pay attention, because we're going to learn tonight from the Word of God how to worship Him.

And, you know, if I were to talk to you tonight about prophecy, you would be sitting on the edge of your mat. And incidentally, I've got some messages percolating around about that volcano, and some other things that I think fit in with prophecy. And if I were to announce that tonight, oh, you'd hunch up and get your notes, and you'd say, "I want to take this down"; but if I talk to you about worship, you say, "Oh, worship: that doesn't seem exciting; that's just sort of an ordinary subject. But, friend, you listen to me. There is nothing more exciting than real worship, and there is nothing that will meet your need and your heart hunger like real worship; and you have a thirst—a God-given, a God-created thirst—that nothing can satisfy apart from worship in spirit and in truth. I'm not talking about a worship service; I'm not even talking about a church service, as such;

but I am talking about a genuine encounter with God in Holy Spirit worship.

Now tonight I want you to notice three things in this passage of Scripture that we're looking at. First of all, I want you to notice the motive for worship: why should we worship. Secondly, I want you to look at the manner of worship: how should we worship. And then, thirdly, I want us to look at the mandate of worship: what will worship cause us to do when we truly do worship.

I. The Motive for Worship

Now, first of all, what is the motive for worship? Look again in chapter 4 and verse 23. Jesus said, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."* What is the motive for worship?

A. God Desires Worship

Number one: God desires it. God wants you to worship Him. Look at that verse: *"The Father seeketh such to worship him."* The great desire of the heart of God Almighty is that you worship. Sometimes if we were to ask people, "Why did God make us? Why did God create us? Why are we who we are and what we are?" someone who would be thinking carelessly would say, "Well, God created us to serve Him." Well, not altogether, dear friend—and not primarily. You see, if God wanted servants, He could get better servants than we are. God could create billions of angels just like that—and they do a much better service than we would. Oh, how wise, how intelligent, how strong would be these angels! You see, God is not looking merely for servants. God wants us to worship Him.

Do you think that your primary duty is to work for God—like God needs your labor? It will be a great day in America; it will be a great day in our churches, when we learn the lesson that worship is more important than work, and worship always comes before work. And before our Lord said, "Go ye," (Matthew 28:19) our Lord said, "Tarry ye." (Luke 24:49) And our first obligation is not to spread the gospel—contrary to popular opinion. Now our obligation is to spread the gospel; but our first obligation is to worship God; our first obligation is through worship to be so filled with the Holy Spirit that we are worthy and able to spread the gospel.

Do you know what the first commandment is? The first commandment is not the Great Commission. The first commandment is this—Mark chapter 12 and verse 30: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."* (Mark 12:30) There is nothing more important than just loving God. In Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 26 we read where the writer of Proverbs says, *"My son, give me thine heart."* (Proverbs 23:26)

Now I believe that Solomon is speaking to his own son, but I also believe that it is indicative of what God through Solomon is saying to everyone of us: “My child, give me your heart.” There is only one thing that God needs and God wants—and it is your heart. Can you imagine Almighty God saying to you, “Give me”? God needs nothing from you apart from your love; it is your love that God wants.

You see, if you were to give God your riches, you couldn’t make God any richer, because He owns it all. If you were to give God your strength, you couldn’t make God any stronger, because He is omnipotent. If you were to give God your wisdom, you couldn’t make God any wiser, because God is omniscient. If you were to give God your glory, you couldn’t make God any more glorious, for God is all-glorious. If you were to give God your power, God would be no more powerful, because He is already all-powerful. What I’m saying, dear friend: The thing that God wants from you is your love: *“The Father seeketh such to worship him.”* God is saying to you tonight, “I’m not looking for your money. I’m not looking for your labor. I’m not looking for your strength. I’m not looking for your glory. I want your heart.” *“The Father seeketh such to worship him.”*

And listen to me. If you’re not worshipping Him, but you’re serving Him—so you think—you’re making a big mistake. To pray without worship is mockery; to sing without worship is sounding brass; to work without worship is an insult to God; to teach without worship is ignorance; to serve without worship is hypocrisy; and to witness without worship is perjury. God wants your worship. *“The Father seeketh such to worship him.”*

And here is the exciting thing about it. Worship is really the love of God—just loving God. And do you know there are other people who may be able to give more than you can give, and there may be people who can pray better than you can pray, and there may be those who can sing more sweetly than you can sing, and there may be those who can teach better than you can teach, and there may be those who can witness with more ability than you can witness; but, bless God, no one can love Him more than you can love Him? Isn’t that wonderful? And that’s what He wants more than anything else. I tell you, that’s a tremendous thought. Everyone here can love the Lord equally, and you’re not behind the door when it comes to being able to love God if you want to. And that, above all things, is what the Father seeks.

“My son,” He says, “give me your heart.” That’s what God wants. God is a God of love. And what good is it to be a God of love unless there’s someone that you may love and someone who can love you in return?

B. God Deserves Worship

And so, the motive for worship, number one: God desires it. The motive for worship, number two: God deserves it. Now Jesus said—look at that verse again in verse 23—*“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in*

spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Do you know what the word *worship* means? Well, you can almost hear it in the word *worship*: it means “worth-ship.” It means that when we worship God, we are giving to Him and attributing to Him and assigning to Him our estimation of His worth. You see, God is God, and God deserves that we worship Him, because there is no other God. It is God who made us. It is God who created us. It is God who sustains us. It is God who is all glory. Not only does He desire worship, but He deserves worship, because there is no other like Him.

Have you ever thought about God being called a jealous God? Now sometimes when we talk about God being called a jealous God, people say, “Well, I just don’t think God ought to be a jealous God,” because we’ve always been taught that jealousy is wrong. Jealousy is not always wrong. There are certain instances where jealousy may be very right and acceptable. You know, the Bible says about God in Exodus chapter 34 and verse 14, “*For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*” (Exodus 34:14) Did you know one of the names of God is Jealous? “The God whose name is Jealous is a jealous God.”

You say, “Well, I always thought jealousy was a bad attribute.” Well, it all depends. Now for me to be jealous of another preacher would be wrong. For Brother Lane to be jealous of another singer would be wrong. For you to be jealous of another athlete, or whatever, would be wrong.

I remember reading about Leonardo da Vinci, who was a great artist and greatly talented of the Lord, and the Roman government asked Leonardo da Vinci to design some buildings, and at about the same time they turned around and asked another young artist, Michelangelo, to design some buildings, too. And it almost did Leonardo da Vinci in, because he was envious and he was jealous of Michelangelo. Now Leonardo da Vinci had no right to be jealous of Michelangelo. Why? Because he wasn’t the only artist in the world.

I have no right to be jealous of another preacher, because I’m not the only preacher in the world. I don’t own preaching. Tommy has no right to be jealous of other singers, because he doesn’t own music. There are other singers in the world. An athlete doesn’t have a right to be jealous of another athlete, because he doesn’t own athletics. There is more than one preacher. There is more than one singer. There is more than one businessman. But there’s only one God, and therefore He has every right to be jealous of the worship and the adoration and the praise that has come to Him. He deserves it.

You put yourself in God’s place—you’re the one who made heaven and earth—and then imagine people worshipping a frog, or a beetle, or money, or sports, or family, or their own intellect, or their denomination, or their church—and then you’d understand why the Bible says, “*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God*”; (Exodus 20:5) “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*” (Exodus 20:3)

C. He Demands Worship

There is only one God. He desires worship. He deserves worship. But I'll tell you the third motive for worship: He demands worship. *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) And if you fail to worship Him, you're not just missing a blessing; you are sinning against Him; you are in rebellion. And there is no greater sin than to fail to worship Him.

I remember talking to a man one day trying to get him to become a Christian, and this man began to stick out his chest and tell me what a good man he was: how he did this thing and how he did that thing, and how he didn't lie, and how he didn't steal, and how he didn't drink, and how he took care of his family. And then he said, "And what fault do you find in me?" I said, "I charge you with high treason against your King for failing to worship God."

There is no greater sin. Listen. What is the first commandment? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength." Dear friend, if that's the first commandment, to break it is the greatest sin. It's a greater sin than rape, a greater sin than murder, a greater sin than perversion, to fail to worship God. God desires it. God deserves it. God demands it. *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."* And, oh, it's about time that we came back to see how important this matter of worship is!

And because God demands it, God is not going to bless anybody who doesn't worship. You've got to learn how to worship, if you want power. You can read in your Bible that when people started to worship, God started to move. You remember King Jehoshaphat and the armies of Moab and Mount Seir were out there and surrounded the armies of Israel, and Jehoshaphat came to the Lord and he said, "Lord, what shall we do?" And the Lord said, "Jehoshaphat, I want you to appoint some praisers just to go out and worship me in the beauty of holiness." And these men, this army, went against the army of Jehoshaphat and all of these men armed with all sorts of armor. And they went forth just praising the Lord, just singing the Lord's praises. And God gave victory, because they worshipped Him. (2 Chronicles 20:1–30)

I can think about Joshua walking around the walls of Jericho, worshipping the Lord, praising the Lord, giving the shout of praise, and the walls fell down. (Joshua 6) I don't even have time to get into that. But I tell you, when we begin to worship, then God begins to work. And there is nothing that will wipe the devil out; there is nothing that will cause iron gates to yield, like worship and praising the Lord! And, friend, if it seems like God is not real to you; if it seems like when you pray your prayers are dry and juiceless, try worship, try praise, and you'll have an ocean to swim in. Worship the Lord! Praise the Lord! Give Him the glory due to His name!

Go home and get the book of Psalms, and when you start to read the book of

Psalms, every time there's an injunction to praise the Lord, or sing unto the Lord, or give the Lord glory, or worship the Lord, underscore it. It will amaze you, dear friend, that God has demanded that we worship Him. And when we begin to worship, I want to tell you that God begins to work. And it's time that we pull some of the groans out of our prayers and shoved in a few hallelujahs and learned how to worship the Lord!

II. The Manner of Worship

All right, what is the motive for worship? We've given it to you. Now, let's go on and think about the manner of worship. I want us to continue to read—look in verse 19—we're in John 4, verse 19: *"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain;"*—and she's talking about Mount Gerizim there in Samaria—*"and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place"*—Mount Zion—*"where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:19–24)

Now we've talked about the motive of worship; let's talk about the manner of worship. How should we worship? There are three things I want you to learn about worship.

A. Worship Must Not Be Localized

Number one: Worship must not be localized. That is, you must not have some particular place where you say, "This is where I worship God." Now that was this woman's hang-up. She was saying, "Now, where is the right place to worship? Do we worship God here on Mount Gerizim like the Samaritans say, or do we worship God down in Jerusalem like the Jews say? And Jesus said unto her, "Woman, you need to understand that real worship is not tied up in a place; it is tied up in a person."

Now I want you to learn that, dear friend, if your worship is wrapped up in a place, you need revival. Now I'm not saying we cannot come to a place like this to worship. I would not be so foolish as to pray against church attendance. I believe in church attendance. The Bible says we're not to forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."* (Hebrews 10:25) I believe in coming together. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that when you learn what true worship is, you will learn that there is no ground that is not holy ground, and there is no time that is not a sacred time, and there is no place where God will not meet man. And that's an exciting thing. There are so many people that have their worship tied up in places and buildings and shrines, and

they think that they have to go to that place, and suddenly they have to get in sort of a stained glass atmosphere in order to worship God. And they think they're worshipping God, when they're worshipping a place.

Have you been into any of the great cathedrals? I have. I think many of you have been in Notre Dame, or Westminster Abbey, or some of these places, these great, beautiful churches; and when you walk in, almost invariably you start to whisper. Oh, it is so beautiful! It is so impressive! It's just, oh, inspiring! But, friend, getting quiet in an imposing building is not worshipping God. You might be worshipping architecture, you might be worshipping sunlight coming through stained glass windows, and you might get a very wonderful feeling. And I'm not putting down the buildings—don't get me wrong—but I'm just telling you that if you have to go to a building like that to get a spooky feeling, you don't know anything about worship.

When you study the Bible, you'll find out that Abraham worshipped God under a tree. Moses worshipped God by a bush in the wilderness. Noah worshipped God in an ark. Adam worshipped God in a garden. Jonah worshipped God in a fish. Paul worshipped God by a roadside. Jacob worshipped God with his head upon a stone. Zacchaeus worshipped God when he was up a tree—out on a limb, worshipping God.

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you're going to find out that every day is a holy day, every place is a sacred place, and there is no time and no place where you cannot worship God. It's not in that mountain; it's not in this mountain; for God is a Spirit, and a Spirit is everywhere. Hallelujah! Driving down the road with my car, I'd say most of the time, you're going to find me worshipping God, just a chapel on wheels. I even sing, Tommy, to myself, with the windows rolled up. And I'm just praising the Lord and worshipping the Lord.

Oh, we make a mistake sometimes: we come into our buildings, you know, and all the sudden we turn it on; and then we get outside the buildings, and we turn it off. The thing that bothers me is to have a preacher stand up, and all of the sudden when he gets behind what he calls "the sacred desk," he puts on his preaching voice and preaching mannerisms, and he sounds like he has a steeple stuck in his throat. And he gets up there and sort of puts it on. And when he goes out, he turns it off again. And there are people, you know, who wouldn't think of smoking a cigarette in here, who wouldn't think of smoking a cigar in here, and who walk out there and smoke a cigarette, walk out there and smoke a cigar.

Friend, listen. This building is not the temple. You are the temple of God. Don't you know that? Now I don't want you to smoke in here. But that's not the point. The point is: If you're going to desecrate anything, it would be better to desecrate this building than to desecrate your body, amen? *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and you are not your own? for you*

are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) Everywhere—any time, any place: worship must not be localized. And if you have to go to any place to get near to God, you need a revival.

B. Worship Must Not Be Formalized

Now, the second thing that Jesus taught about worship: Worship not only must not be localized, but worship must not be formalized. For Jesus went on to say, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

Well, what happens when you worship God in spirit? When you worship God in spirit, there's liberty, not formalism; not ritualism, but liberty. Put in your margin 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 17: *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* (2 Corinthians 3:17) I want to tell you something, friend: Formalism and true worship are two things. The more aesthetic a person is, the more they tend toward formalism. And everybody likes to have a pretty service. And I don't mind telling you, I like to have a pretty service, and I like a service that has form; but I don't like a service that has formalism. There's a difference. I don't mean that we have to be hokey or we have to be country. You can get off the reservation on either side. We don't have to freeze in formalism. We don't have to fry in fanaticism. But I'm saying that, *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*

And when you're worshipping the Lord, it's not just always real quiet music and everybody sitting still and nobody smiling and nobody laughing and nobody shouting—no joy. That's not worship. Someone says, "Well, that's dignity." But as I've said before, they don't know the difference between dignity and rigor mortis. Listen, friend. If you study worship in the Bible, you'll find out that worship in the Bible was marked with brightness; it was marked with spontaneity; it was marked with joy.

I was just sitting up there on the platform and the Lord put a scripture in my mind. And I want you to turn to it in Revelation chapter 5. I was thinking to myself—we were having such a good time tonight in the song service, and you look so happy—and I was thinking, "Is that right or wrong?" And of course I knew it was right. And I turned to Revelation chapter 5, verse 11, and it talks about a worship service in heaven. Now, folks, if anybody knows how to worship and when to worship, they ought to know about worship in heaven. And I want you to begin here in Revelation 5, verse 11: *"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;"*—people say, "Well, I don't like a big worship service." I don't know what you're going to do when you get to heaven, mister. All right, look—*"saying with a loud voice..."*—somebody said, "I just don't like that loud singing"—*"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 blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen.” It doesn’t hurt you to say *amen* in the church. *“And the four and twenty elders fell down”—*that is, they fell on their faces—*“and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 5:11–14)

Don’t you want to be in that worship service? It’s going to come to pass when we worship the Lord. I mean, saying, “honor and glory and blessing, hallelujah, amen,” as we bow before the great God with loud voices. And I tell you, *“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”* And the Bible says we are to worship Him in spirit. There is nothing deader than a worship service without the Spirit of God. Those early Christians had something that fire could not burn, that swords could not kill, that water could not drown, that jails could not hold; and therefore they were attractive to other people.

Listen. There are few things that will be as attractive to get the lost to come to Bellevue Church as worship services. I was just thinking again when we had that great song service that Dr. Lane led us in; I was just thinking, you know, there’s nothing like this in all of the Mid-South that I know of, where you just come and hear that kind of music and participate in it, and be with these people—and, you know, that has an attraction to it. And you people are so happy, and you’re shaking hands and praising God, and you’ve got your Bibles, and you’re listening to the Word of God. And listen, friend. That’s wonderful. And that has such an appeal.

Here’s a woman sometimes in one of these cold, dry, formal churches, and she tries, she begs her husband to come to church, and he’s an unsaved man. He finally says, “All right, I’ll come this one time, but don’t you ever ask me to come again.” And then, suppose he comes. He sits back there on the back row and he folds his arms and looks out under his eyebrows and says, “All right, do your stuff.” And then, suppose they come out, and they have a song service, and they sing in Latin, and he can’t understand it. And then the congregational service sounds like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm, and nobody is singing. And then the preacher comes out and he gives some soliloquy, some book review, something like that; and the people sit there stone cold. He can hardly wait to get out of that place.

But you let him come to a service where the Spirit of the Lord is, where there’s liberty; and you let that choir stand up and get their faces out of that songbook that they’re singing from, and sing with the glory of God on their face, and sing in the Spirit of God; and you let the people as one mighty congregation sing unto the Lord, and give Him the glory due to His name, and let the man of God stand behind the desk of God, and open the book of God, and preach the Christ of God, in the Spirit of God, and the

people of God say *amen*; and that man is going to look around and say, “These folks believe that stuff.” I’m going to tell you something. Before long, he’ll be believing it, too.

It is caught as well as taught. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Formalism is the death knell of evangelism.

I’m not talking about a service that doesn’t have form, for the Bible says, “Let everything be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40) You get up and start walking around while I’m preaching, I just may call you down. If you disturb the service, I may say, “Sir, you’re out of order.” I’m telling you, on the other hand, there needs to be that joy, that civility, that spontaneity, that brightness, that life, that comes from the Spirit of God.

C. Worship Must Not Be Fantasized

Now, look. Jesus taught this woman that worship must not be localized. Jesus taught this woman that worship must not be formalized. And Jesus taught this woman that worship must not be fantasized. What do I mean by that? He says we’re to worship the Lord not only in spirit, but in truth. It’s not enough to worship, if the worship is just a fantasy of your mind, some God that you have conjured up out of your own mind. You need truth. There is a theology of worship. In verse 22, we find out that this woman was worshipping, but she didn’t know what she was worshipping. Jesus said, “*Ye worship ye know not what.*” She was worshipping an unknown God. It’s not enough to be sincere. No worship is acceptable to God unless it is worship in the truth. And Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:6) And even this woman knew that to truly worship God she must worship God through the Messiah. And Jesus said to her, “I am the Messiah.”

The way to worship God, therefore, is to worship God through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way. You cannot fantasize your worship. You cannot just try to worship in your own way. You must come to the Bible and worship the Bible way; and you must worship God in the Spirit through the Son; and that’s the way the Father seeks you to worship Him. Worship must not be localized. Worship must not be formalized. Worship must not be fantasized. It must be in spirit and in truth.

III. The Mandate of Worship

Now, one last thing: I want you to notice not only the motive for worship; and I want you to notice not only the manner of worship; but I want you to notice the mandate of worship—because it is not enough, ladies and gentleman, to worship God. You must worship God. You should worship God. But any real worship will show itself in evangelism and service. That’s what Jesus told the devil when the devil tempted Him to bow down and worship him. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 10, “*Thou shalt*

worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10)

Now I want you to notice Jesus links worship and service together. And *any so-called worship that is not the blood brother of evangelism is false worship*. Now, you know, there are some people who say, "Well, you know, I just wish we had more worship services; I don't like these evangelistic services." Well, let me tell you something, friend. I don't know whether you realize it or not, but I preach very little evangelism; and yet it's amazing, when people talk about Bellevue Church, they talk about an evangelistic church. But if you think back, most preaching I do is verse by verse right on through the Bible on all manner of subjects, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and I'm preaching primarily on the Christian life, just like I'm doing tonight; but when I finish preaching, I tell them about Jesus and how to get saved, and I give an invitation. And there's nothing that I preach that somehow, some way, I cannot put an evangelistic bar on the end of it. I'm not just standing up here preaching, "Hell hot, heaven sweet, sin black, judgment sure, and Jesus saves," although that's a pretty good outline. But I'm preaching all manner of truths. But I'm saying this: Anything that I preach that deals with worship and the Christian life that is not the blood brother of evangelism, there's something wrong with it.

And people talk about worship service: Mister, I want to tell you, one of the times I worship God the best and the most is when people are getting saved, when people are coming to Jesus. And I want to tell you, there's glory in heaven when people are coming to Jesus, and glory is being given to God when people are coming to Jesus. And never let it be thought that you choose between worship and evangelism. That is foolishness. Real worship always results in evangelism.

And when this woman learned about worship, she went and got a whole city to come out and meet the Messiah. And, friend, "They that wait upon the Lord shall run." (Isaiah 40:31) You, when you worship, you're going to witness; but when you do witness, you're going to witness with a new power—because when you've been tarrying before the Lord, you're going to meet Him, and your witness and your service will be different. You'll not be burning the wick anymore; you'll be burning the oil. And it makes a big difference when you start to burn the oil rather than the wick: you don't smoke the chimney so much, and you last a whole lot longer. The oil is the oil of the Holy Spirit of God, and He anoints us as we worship Him.

A man was in one of these old-fashioned Quaker meetings. You know, the Quakers just kind of sit around and they're quiet in their meetings. And the man came in, and they were all just sitting there; and so the man who had never been in a Quaker meeting opened his mouth and he said, "When does the service begin?" And the old Quaker said, "As soon as the meeting is over."

Conclusion

Now, friend, when a real worship service is over, the service begins. We talk about going to the services; well, we've come to the worship service: *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* There is a mandate to worship. And any worship that is not the blood brother of evangelism and service to God is not true worship. And you can only worship God through Jesus in the Spirit. And it is the worship of God alone that will satisfy the longing of your heart. And it is the worship of God alone that will satisfy the longing of the Father's heart. God thirsts for your worship just as you thirst to worship Him. What fools we are if we don't learn how to worship!

Faithful in Worship

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 15, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 4:3–24

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

JOHN 4:23–24

Outline

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- II. The Method of True Worship
 - A. You Must Be Regenerated by the Father
 - B. You Must Be Activate by the Spirit
 - C. You Must Be Regulated by the Word
- III. The Motive of True Worship

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Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to John, chapter 4, and when you found it, just look up here. A factor of faithfulness—if you would be faithful to the Lord Jesus and faithful to His church—is indeed worship. Let me tell you this. To learn to worship is your greatest need. To worship in Spirit and in truth is the ultimate privilege. And to worship God is, beyond a doubt, the supreme duty of any child of God. Let me say it again for emphasis. To worship is your greatest need. To worship is your ultimate privilege. To worship is your supreme duty. Now, if I can get that out of my heart into your heart today, I'll be happy, you'll be blessed, and God will be glorified. If you can see that to learn to worship is your greatest need, your greatest privilege, your greatest duty, is to worship God. We are invited, we are commanded, we are encouraged, we are empowered, to worship Him. That, my friend, is, as the businessman would say, the bottom line. Going to heaven is not the bottom line. We go to heaven to worship Him. Being saved is not the bottom line. We're saved so that we can worship Him. You would be better if you worshiped better. Why worship? Very simply this: we become like what we worship. Whatever a man worships conforms that man. The Bible speaks of those who worship idols. And Psalm 115, verses 4 to 8—don't turn to it—it's a very interesting passage; it

speaks of the heathen. It says, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears but they hear not: noses they have, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.” And now here is the verse that I want to emphasize: “They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” Do you get that? First, a man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. We become like what we worship. If you worship idols, you’ll become like the idol that you worship. But if you worship the Lord, if you behold His face as in a glass, you’re changed from glory to glory to the same image. When you put a poker in the fire, and leave it in there long enough, before long, the fire is in the poker. Is that not true? I mean, it comes out glowing and red hot. When you immerse yourself in the presence of God, before long, the presence of God is in you. True worship will make you more like the one that you worship. And so, we’re going to learn a lesson today on worship. We’re going to learn that worship is the ultimate privilege, the supreme duty, and the greatest need of the child of God.

There was a woman who learned this long ago, a woman of Samaria, and I want you to look, if you will, in verse 3—chapter 4, verse 3: “He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.” Now, the need was not a geographical need. It would have been much simpler for Him to go another route. This is a mountainous route. He must needs go because he had a spiritual mandate, a spiritual reason for going. “Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now, Jacob’s well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and cometh hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her,

Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands”—today, she could get an academy award, couldn't she?—“...thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidest thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.”

Now, that is an extended passage. But what a wonderful passage that is, because it teaches us to worship. Do you know what's wrong with the modern church today? We have forgotten how to worship. There are people today who say, well, if you want to build a great church, on Sunday morning, talk to the people about their needs. And help them to have their needs met. And when they talk about their needs, they're talking about their emotional, psychological, physical needs. That is, begin to scratch the people where they itch. And so many of our worship services across America have left Theology and gone to Me-ology. It's man-centered rather than God-centered. Rather than worshiping God, we come, and we turn our eyes inward, and upon ourselves, seeking to find life. But Jesus said, whosoever will save his life, shall lose it. But whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall find it. If you want to be utterly miserable, turn you life inward. If you want to be filled with joy, turn your life upward. Look into the face of God and learn to worship. Now, we've studied this morning, and read this morning, about a woman who was a miserable woman. And the reason that she was as miserable woman is she had never learned to worship. She was self-centered. She had been blinded by Satan. She was a slave to sin. She had sought satisfaction in the things of this world, and she had gone from one husband to another. You can count them—five. And then she had begun to live a life of immorality, perhaps as a prostitute, or she had taken up with some ne'er-do-well, as she's living now with a man. They had not even had the benefit of a marriage ceremony. She thought that she could find joy in these things, but it is all turned to dust. And she's like a faded flower now, living in immorality. She'd been blinded by the devil. The devil says, I'm going to make you happy, but he's brought to her misery. Because not only has she been blinded by Satan; she has been broken by sorrow. Life has its thrills, but it has no real joy, apart from the Lord Jesus. Sin at first is so attractive, so alluring. The bread of deceit is sweet, but afterward a man's mouth shall be filled with gravel. And she's like so many today, living what they call the new morality. It's not new, and it's certainly not

moral. And the Hollywood crowd that I just referred to a little bit ago, we have young actresses today who have faces like angels and morals like alley cats. Don't envy them; feel sorry for them. Here was a woman who was blinded by Satan. Here was a woman who was broken by sorrow. And, here was a woman who was bound by sin. She was a religious woman. That is an interesting thing. She wanted to talk religion. But her religion, you see, had never helped her. She had some ideas, but they were not from God. And her religion had not worked. She had a form of godliness, but there was no power in it. And this is why the Lord Jesus taught this woman about worship. Now many of you may not be as destitute and as down as this woman, but I can tell you that, whether you are up and out, or down and out, your need, today, is to learn to worship God.

Now, why did God make you? Well, you say, God made me to serve Him. No. If God wanted servants, He'd get angels, not human beings. They're a lot more punctual, a lot more faithful. No, no, He didn't make you primarily to serve Him. He made you to worship Him, to love Him, to know Him, to enjoy Him, and for Him to enjoy you. What did God make a fish to do? He made a fish to swim in the sea. What did God make a bird to do? He made a bird to fly in the air. What did God make you to do? God made you, God created you, for Himself, to enjoy Him, and for Him to enjoy you. And until you do that, you'll never know fulfillment. You take a fish out of the sea and put him in the tree, to say the least, he's an unhappy fish. Take a bird out of the air, and put him under the water, to say the least, he's an unhappy bird. Take a man who is made for God, and immerse him in the things of this world, apart from God, and he will have no fulfillment. That's what the apostle Paul said in the 17th chapter of Acts there to those superstitious people on Mars Hill. You don't even know what you're worshiping. He said, God made us to worship Him, for in Him we live and move and have our being. The element for a fish is water. The element for a bird is air. The element for a child of God is God himself. In Him, we live and move and have our being. And until you learn to worship, you'll be like a fish out of water. You'll be like a round peg in a square hole. We need to learn to worship. There are three things I pray God that the Holy Spirit of God will emblazon upon your heart today, as we look at this passage and learn of worship.

I. The Meaning of True Worship

Number one, we must learn the meaning of true worship. Look in verse 22—Jesus said to this woman, “Ye worship ye know not what...” And, there are many people like that who do not understand the meaning of worship. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 15, “in vain do they worship.” There is such thing as vain worship. For example, those that worship idols worship vainly. Exodus thirteen, verse fourteen: “For thou shalt worship no other God, for the Lord whose name is jealous is a jealous God.” Now, friend, you

provoke the Almighty to jealousy if you worship some idol. Isaiah chapter 48, verse 11—God says, “I will not give my glory unto another.” When you worship some New Age deity, when you worship some god of superstition, or some god of substance or success, or even yourself—and there are many who worship at the shrine of self—then you provoke the Lord to jealousy, because God says, “I will not share my glory with another.”

And then, not only is there idolatrous worship; there is insincere worship. Listen to this passage of Scripture—Matthew chapter 15, verse 8: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” We sang this morning that Jesus is more precious than silver, more costly than gold, and I suppose that most of you sang that. But I wonder, did you mean it? Did you honor Him with your lips, but your heart was far from Him? We sing, take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. And we withhold it with all our might. Isn't that true? We sing, all to Jesus I surrender; all to Him I freely give, and don't even get back to prayer meeting. What do we do? We sing, faith of our fathers, holy faith, to thee I'll be true, even to death. And we are ashamed even to bow our heads and thank God for food in a public restaurant. We sing, all that thrills my soul is Jesus, and then we spend time eating garbage and tin cans in the back alley with the devil's billy goats, saying, All that thrills my soul is Jesus. Half-hearted worship is an insult to Almighty God.

There is idolatrous worship. There is insincere worship. There's even iniquitous worship. Did you know that if you come to this place today to worship God, or get on your knees at home, and there is sin in your heart, it makes God angry. Amos chapter 5—listen to this. God says, in verse 21: “I hate, I despise your feast days and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies...” What that means is, your incense that you burn, “I'll not taste of it with my nostrils. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of thy songs.” We said, Lord, we thought it was pretty. God says, “take away the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy vows”—that is, of your orchestra when it plays—“but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” When we worship God with sin in our heart, God says, I will not hear you. He that offers his prayer, even his prayer shall be an abomination. To worship God with an unclean heart is an abomination to God. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 5, when you bring your offering to the altar, you come to church to make your offering. God says, don't leave it. I mean, don't give it. Listen to it. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother have alt against thee—that is, that you've sinned against somebody, and you've not made it right—leave there thy gift before the altar, and go they way. First, be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift. I don't care how much money you give today. If

you give money with hatred in your heart, or if you give money with unreconciled sins that are not made right, it is vain worship. It is an insult to Almighty God. God says, leave the money; go make it right with your brother. It's very interesting. God didn't say, take the money with you. God said, I won't receive it, and God says, you can't keep it. It's tainted money. 'Taint yours, and God won't receive it. Either way, it belongs to God. Don't say, Oh well, then, since I'm not going to get my heart right, I'll just take this money then and spend it. No, that's not what Jesus said. Jesus says, you put that money in escrow. Go get right with your brother. Go get right with your sister. Go ask for forgiveness, and then come and bring that offering. You see, there is idolatrous worship. There is insincere worship. There is iniquitous worship. And, God says, I will not accept that kind of worship.

What is true worship? Jesus said to this woman, you worship, but you don't know what you're worshipping. Now, let me tell you what worship is. Worship is the adoring contemplation of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Worship is all that we are, responding to all that God is. All that we are—body, soul and spirit; mind, emotion and will. As much as in me is with my whole heart. It is everything responding to all that God is. Our English word worship comes from the old worth ship. That is, we worship according to the worth that we place on God. What do we see is worth our worship? We worship what we feel is worthy or of worth. That's the reason we heard this morning, Revelation chapter 5, verse 12, speaking of those around the throne saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." How? When? And the way that a person worships says what they think of God. You want me to tell you your barometer of God—how much you love God, what you think of God? Your worship life. Have you ever seen one of those coffee urns, and on the outside is a glass tube? You want to know what's on the inside? You just look at that glass tube. Friend, do you want to know what's in your heart? Just look at your worship. The way you worship God will tell me what you think of the Lord Jesus Christ—well, how much He's worth to you. Whatever Jesus is worth to you will show up in your worship. It literally means, worth ship. How many times we confuse worship with prayer, and even with praise, and those are elements of worship, but they're not the bottom line of worship. I told you before of a woman who was trapped in an apartment building. A brave fireman, she was there at the window screaming for help. A brave fireman went up a ladder to rescue her. Literally, took her in his arms, and brought her down that ladder. It was one of those melodramatic stories that we've read about. Sat her on the ground. She was saved; her life was saved. Later on, she went to the firehouse to thank that fireman. They got acquainted. They began to date. They got married, and, I trust, lived happily ever after. When she was in that window saying, help me, save me, that was like prayer, saying, God, I've got a need. I

need you. And that's legitimate. We need to do that. And, we call upon Him when we're in trouble. Thank God for that. That is petition. Then, when she went to the firehouse to say, thank you. That's praise and thanksgiving. And we ought to do that. You're a strong, wonderful firemen. Thank you for risking your life. And how many times we ought to come to God, and thank God, and give God glory, and give God praise. But when they fell in love and got married, and she loved him now, not because he had rescued her, not because of these other things, but she loved him for who he is, and she gave all of her to all of him, friend, that is like worship. And that's where many of us fail to come to the bottom line, and sometimes our prayers are, help me, Lord; save me. And that's wonderful. Or, thank you, Lord, for what you've done, but how many times have we just simply come to God, and said, O God, I just pour out my heart in love to you. That is true worship. Now, you must know the meaning of worship.

II. The Method of True Worship

Now, you must also practice the true method of worship. What is the method of worship? Look, if you will, in verses 21 and following: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know that what we worship for salvation is of the Jews." Now watch this: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Now, what is the method of true worship? Do I have your attention? We worship God in Spirit and in truth. Who said so? The Lord Jesus. Now, here was a woman, and she wants to have a theological argument, because Jesus is getting very close to her deepest need. And so, she's trying to change the subject, like many people do when you witness to them; they want to argue religion rather than look God in the face. And so, she said, now, wait a minute. You say, you being a Jew, the Jews worship at Jerusalem there on Mt. Zion, and Mt. Moriah where the temple is. We are Samaritans. We worship here in Samaria, Mt. Gerezon. And so, which is the true place to worship? She wanted to get an argument going. Now, here is the problem with so much worship today. Do you know what the Samaritans did? They rejected all of the Bible but the first five books of the Bible. I mean, they just rejected—all they accepted was Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They rejected all the rest of it. So, therefore, they were limited in their knowledge. They did not know. They did not understand. They worshiped what they knew not. They had their worship. Their worship in Samaria was primarily emotional. They worked themselves up into a frenzy, emotional worship. Now, the Jews, on the other hand, led primarily by the Pharisees, they had all of the Bible; they had all of the prophets; they had the truth, but they didn't have the Spirit. The Samaritans' worship was enthusiasm—that is, spirited worship. But

they didn't have the truth. And, so often, you see these things together. I mean, today, some are worshiping with simply dry orthodoxy, and others are worshiping with fanaticism, enthusiastic heresy. And some churches, they freeze in formalism, and other churches, they fry in fanaticism. And, they're either like those in Jerusalem or they're like those in Samaria, and neither one of them have... Jesus said, it's not Jerusalem; it's not Samaria. The hour is coming when you will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, and the place of worship will be the heart. Now, how do you do this kind of worship? Let me mention three things. And check up, and see if these things are true about you today. See if you have the true method of worship.

A. You Must Be Regenerated by the Father

Number one, you must be regenerated by the Father—you must be regenerated by the Father. You see, we are to worship the Father, and He is not your Father, unless you're saved, unless you're born again. To the unsaved, you are of your father, the devil. I hope that didn't hurt your feelings, but I do hope it stirred your mind. I do hope that it pricked your conscience. Jesus said the Pharisees, in John 8, verse 44, you are of your father, the devil. Now, to worship the Father, you must make certain that you have been born into the Father's family, that you have been born again, that you have become a partaker of the divine nature. You cannot worship a God that you don't know. You worship, Jesus said to the Samaritan, you're worshiping someone you don't know. Paul said, in Acts chapter 17, to the people in Athens, you are ignorantly worshiping. You must be regenerated by the Father. Have you been saved? Have you been again? Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father, but by me. Is He your Father? Does the Spirit of God in you cry out, Abba, Father? Because the Holy Spirit of God can only help you to worship, when God is your Father. So, that's the very first thing. You must be regenerated by the Father. Have you got it?

B. You Must Be Activated by the Spirit

Secondly, you must be activated by the Spirit—activated by the Spirit. Born from above, and then, you worship from within. The Holy Spirit of God comes into you. Jesus teaches that true worship is Spirit-filled worship. Ephesians chapter 5, verses 18 and 19: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, and making melody in your heart to the Lord." You cannot worship God apart from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Look up here, and let me tell you something. If you're not saved, you cannot worship. If you're not Spirit-filled, you will not worship. If you have trouble with worship, if you have no desire to worship, if worship to you is boring and tedious, do you know what that says about you? You're either not saved or not Spirit-filled. And, how can you be Spirit-filled? Just agree with the Spirit as to the desire and purpose of the Spirit.

What is the desire and the purpose of the Holy Spirit? To glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. When your one goal and aim is to glorify Jesus above everything else, when He's more precious to you than silver, more costly than gold, when you want to adore Him, the Holy Spirit of God that is in you will join you, and praise will come up out of you. Listen to me: when you get Spirit-filled, you'll have to backslide to keep from worshiping; you cannot help but worship. I know when I am Spirit filled. When I eat, when I'm in the car alone, I just want to say, Jesus, I love you. When I'm studying, I want to say, O God, how great you are, and out of my innermost being is flowing a river of living water. And anybody who is filled with the Holy Spirit, and knows that experience, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You must be regenerated by the Father. You must be you must be motivated and energized by the Holy Spirit of God.

C. You Must Be Regulated by the Word

Regenerated by the Father, activated by the Spirit, and regulated by the Word—regulated by the Word. Listen to what Jesus said: You worship the Father—you're regenerated by the Father; in Spirit—you're activated by the Spirit; and in truth—you are regulated by the Word. Now, you get in a lot of services today, and people don't want the Word of God. They just want to come and have a, quote, "praise service." They want to sing, they want to pray, they want to praise, they want to testify, but they don't want to study the Word of God. That's the reason why all true worship is linked with the study of the Word of God. That's the reason we have this pulpit right here. That's the reason you're sitting here this morning with an open Bible in your hand. Psalm 145 and verse 18: "The Lord is high unto all them that call upon him; to all that call upon him in truth"—in truth. You don't just conjure up a god of your own imagination, and then worship him. That's idolatry. Psalm 47 and verse 7: "For God is the king of all the earth. Sing ye praises with understanding." Brother Jim, let's don't sing any songs from this platform that are not theologically sound and that people cannot understand. If you worship God in Spirit without truth, that will make you a fanatic. If you worship God in truth without the Spirit, that will make you a Pharisee. But if you worship God in Spirit and in truth, you'll have one of the grandest experiences you've ever had. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

III. The Motive of True Worship

Now, I've talked to you about the meaning of worship. I've talked to you about the method of worship. Let me talk to you, finally, about the motive of true worship. Look in verse 23—John chapter 4 and verse 23. Look at it—Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father"—underscore this—"...the Father seeketh such to worship him." Did you come to church this morning seeking something? Did you? Well, let me tell you

something: God did, too. God came this morning seeking something. God came seeking worshipers. Did you come seeking to worship? You see, you don't come to church primarily for what you can get; you come for what you can give. You don't come to church to worship; you bring your worship to church. You've been worshiping all through the week, and then, we come corporately to worship together, and God is so pleased when we worship Him corporately, in Spirit and in truth; when we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, but we come together as brother and sisters in Christ to worship our Lord. Do you know what's wrong with many churches? They think that worship is some sort of a spectator sport, that we have this preacher, and we have this choir, and this orchestra, and we have these musicians, and we come and sit down out there, and we get our Bibles out, and we begin to study, and we look up there, and we begin to listen, and we begin to critique the sermon and criticize the music, like somehow it's a performance, and we are the critics. That is not the way it's supposed to be, ladies and gentlemen. Soren Kierkegaard, whose theology I don't agree with completely, said something that I totally agree with. He said, if you think of the worship service as if it were a theater, then don't use this figure of speech. Don't get the idea that the preacher is the actor, and the people out there are the critics to acclaim or to criticize. No, no. The preacher is not the actor. The people are the actor, the preacher is the prompter behind the wings, helping them, and God is the audience. Now, we're not saying it's a drama. We're not saying that at all. We're not saying it's a play—but if it were a play. You see, God is not looking to see you watch me perform. God is here energizing me to help you to praise before God. Do you understand what we're talking about? You see, God is the audience. The preacher is the prompter. We are the ones who praise, and we're to come together gloriously united, praising the Lord Jesus Christ, and giving Him worship, and giving Him praise, and giving Him glory.

Conclusion

Have you ever been in a boring worship service? Never. You've been in some services that were not worship services, but you've never been in a worship service that was boring—I mean, it might have called itself a worship service. But, what could be more thrilling, what could be more glorious, what could be more energizing, what could be more wonderful than when people come to worship the great God of eternity, and lift our hearts to God in praise? Some years ago in a wealthy Boston suburb, a tragic thing happened. Some very wealthy people were going to have what they called a christening for a little baby—a christening party. And so, all of the people came, and they were rejoicing in this little baby—a christening for this little baby. And they were eating, and drinking, and laughing, and after a while, somebody said, where is the baby? The mother's heart just jumped. She thought about the baby. She'd not heard about the

baby, not even a whimper from the baby for a while. She went to the big master bedroom where they had put the baby in the middle of that big bed where they felt it would be safe, and found out that in the darkened room all the guests had come and piled their coats on that bed, and beneath that pile of coats was the smothered and dead form of a little baby. And they'd come to celebrate the christening of that child, and while they were talking and eating and drinking, there was that child, suffocated beneath their coats. I can't think of anything much more tragic in the natural world than that. I can't think of anything much more tragic in the spiritual world than for people to come to a place like this to drink coffee, and slap backs, and fellowship, and laugh, and sing, and fail to remember Jesus, fail to give Him glory, and just let Him be smothered under all of our activities, and fail to worship Him. God's great heart desires worship. Is God some sort of an egotist that we have to praise Him, keep boasting His morale by telling Him how good and how great He is? That's not it at all. Friend, when you worship God, you enjoy God, and God enjoys you, and we would be better if we worshiped better, because we become like what we worship. And he that offers praise glorifies God. How we need today to learn to worship. Our church needs to be a worshipping church. And when you come here on Sunday morning—and, by the way, the Bible teaches corporate as well as individual worship—when you come here on Sunday morning, do you know what you're saying, when you come to this church? You say, well, I'll just have our own little church at home. You'll miss it. The Bible says, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. When you come to church on Sunday morning, do you know what you're saying? You're saying two things to everybody who sees you come. Number one, you're saying, God is important to me. And number two, you're saying, you folks are important to me. You're important to me. My brothers and sisters are important to me. God is important to me, and you're important to me. Friend, when we worship, it shows the worth that we place upon our Lord.

Bow your heads in prayer. Pray this prayer. Lord God, teach me to worship. Teach me to worship in Spirit and in truth. Now, while heads are bowed, if you've never been saved, remember that you cannot worship the Father in Spirit and in truth until He becomes your Father. And He becomes your Father, when you're born into His family, by receiving Jesus into your heart. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life, and no man comes unto the Father but by me. If you're not saved, and you want to be saved, you want to know that you're a child of God, you want to be fitted for worship, would you pray a prayer like this? Dear God, I know that you love me. I know that you want to save me. I confess that I am a sinner. I confess that I deserve judgment and hell because of my sin. But I am sick of my sin. I'm tired of my sin. I repent of my sin. Jesus, I believe that you're the Son of God. I believe you died for my sin on the cross. I believe that God raised you from the dead. And, right now, in repentance and faith, I receive

you, Jesus, into my life, as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Become my Lord and Savior. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of you, because you died for me. In your name I pray. Amen.

The Ultimate Privilege

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 17, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 4:3–24

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

JOHN 3:24

Outline

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- I. The Samaritan Woman Was Bound by Sin
- II. The Samaritan Woman Was Blinded by Satan
- III. The Samaritan Woman Was Broken by Sorrow
- IV. The Steps of Worshiping God

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, and find John chapter 4, and I want to talk to you about “The Ultimate Privilege.”

What is the ultimate privilege? Somebody says, “The ultimate privilege is knowing God.” Well, that is a privilege, but not the ultimate privilege. Well, somebody says, “The ultimate privilege is being a child of God.” What a privilege, but not the ultimate privilege. Somebody says, “The ultimate privilege is going to heaven.” What a privilege, but not the ultimate privilege. The ultimate privilege is something you can do right now, tonight, every day, in any place. The ultimate privilege is to worship God—to worship God.

Now, if you know God, and don’t worship Him, what a pity. What are we going to do in heaven? Walk on golden streets? Look at gates of pearls? Sit on a fluffy cloud? No! We are going to worship God. The worship of God is the bottom line. The worship of God is the ultimate priority. The worship of God is the highest good. It is the supreme duty. It is the maximum privilege. And Jesus told us that it was the greatest commandment, to love God with all of our strength.

Now, look, if you will, in John chapter 4 and verse 24, the very familiar verse: “God is a Spirit—literally, in the Greek language, God is Spirit; not a spirit, as if there are many like Him, but God is Spirit—and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” That’s what our Lord said.

Now, if you take this chapter in the Word of God, you’re going to find that the word

worship is used in various forms at least ten times. It is the key to this wonderful worship.

Now, go back to verse 4, and I want you to notice the background—chapter 4 and verse 3. The Bible speaks of Jesus, and it says, “And he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee, and he must needs go through Samaria.”

Now, I’ve been from Judea to Galilee many times, and sometimes I’ve gone through Samaria, but most of the time, I have not. To go through Samara is the most difficult way. It is the mountainous way. It’s a trip of about sixty miles of tortuous geography. And many times, the Jews, in order to escape going through Samaria, and to take the easier route, would go along the Jordan River bank. But this says, “He must needs go through Samara.” Now, it wasn’t that He wanted to go through Samaria because it was difficult. No. It wasn’t because He wanted to go through Samaria because the Samaritans were hostile. It was difficult, and the Samaritans were hostile. As a matter of fact, the Samaritans were an unusual people.

In 721, the Babylonians had come and carried away great numbers of Jews from that area to Babylon in the captivity. Now, those that were sick, those that were mentally unbalanced, those that were infirm, those that had some impediment of some kind, would not make good slaves; they would be a burden to the state of Babylon. So they left them there. And some Babylonians stayed as an occupational force, and they intermarried with these Jews. And so, they were what some would look upon as a mongrel race, as a mixed race. And they were despised, and they were rejected. They were looked upon as being inferior, and they did have, many of them, genetic disabilities that remain until this day. Nobody else would have much to do with them. They were not able to come back later to Judea, down to Jerusalem, to the temple to worship, so they built their own house of worship on a mountain there, Mount Gerizim. And they said, “Well, that’s the right place to worship. The Jews are worshiping in Jerusalem. They’re worshiping in the wrong place.” And they were despised and looked down upon, the Jews, and they returned the favor to the Jews.

Now, Jesus came and led a woman of Samaria to Christ. And I want to say right now that Jesus is not the white man’s Savior; He’s not the western man’s Savior; He’s not the male Savior. He is the Savior of the whole wide world. Sometimes, when I get on a radio program, or a television program, the person, if he wants to try to put me on the spot, or put me in a corner, will ask me a question like this: “Do you believe that a Jew without Christ is lost?” I just say, “Look, I believe one of my own children without Christ is lost.” People are not saved or lost because they’re Jew or Gentile; if they know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, they’re saved. If they don’t, they are not saved.

So why did Jesus go through Samaria? Well, I believe with all of my heart He was

on a divine appointment. God brought Jesus and the Samaritan woman together that she might drink of the water of life. And I want to say something else. I believe you're here tonight by divine appointment. I don't believe this is happenstance. I believe that God has a message for you, and God has a blessing for you today. Now, you may miss it, because God gives you a will, but this is not just a reckless happenstance or a meeting tonight. God does all things well.

Now, I want you to notice the woman that Jesus met there at the well. Verse 5: "Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. Now, Jacob's well was there..."—and, by the way, it's still there. You can get a drink of water from that well even today. It's very deep, and it goes back to antiquity—"Now, Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey—there you see Jesus in His humanity—set thus on the well..." Now, there's a curbing around the well. It's about that high. It's just right to make a seat, and Jesus is sitting there. Having been there, I can envision this as one of the true, authentic spots in the Holy Land. And Jesus is tired. He's sitting on the well. It's about the sixth hour. It's about noon, really. That's in Bible time. "And there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." And, by the way, most of the women went to draw water early in the morning when it was cool, but this woman, because she was not only a Samaritan, she was a social outcast, came at noontime by herself to draw water. "And Jesus saith unto her, would you get me a drink? Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat—or food. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep..."—and, friend, it is a deep well. You can take some water and drop it and wait for a while before you hear it splash in the bottom—"...from where, then, hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father, Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof of himself, drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered, and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered, and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that thou saidist truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that

thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” And then the verse we began with. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Now, indeed, this was a divine appointment. And I want you to notice the woman that Jesus met.

I. The Samaritan Woman Was Bound by Sin

First of all, she was bound by sin. If you read there, beginning in verse 16, Jesus said, “Go, call your husband.” She said, “I don’t have a husband.” He said, “That’s right. You’ve had five, and now you’re living with a man that you’re not even married to.” It was a mark of shame in that day. Today, she’d get an academy award. But, she was gone from husband to husband. She had gone from affair to affair, and it had all turned to dust before her, and she is now just bound by sin. This poor woman had become the dirty plaything of even dirtier men, and now she was living with a man without even the benefit of a marriage ceremony. And, you see, the new morality is not old. It’s one of the mustiest and dirtiest things around. And, again, Hollywood is setting the stage for these actresses that have faces like angels and morals like alley cats. Hey, young folks, college students, don’t envy those people. I’m telling you, don’t envy those people. They never really understand what God has planned. There is nothing better, more wonderful, more glorious, than a happy Christian home—one man married to one woman unto death do them part. I want to stand here and just say I want to give that testimony. Don’t ever envy these people. Only a fool envies fools.

II. The Samaritan Woman Was Blinded by Satan

And she was bound by sin, poor woman. And she was blinded by Satan. If she could write out her testimony, she would say, “Satan lied to me.” This woman was the finished product of the devil’s art. He told her that he was going to satisfy her, but her burned out life was a monument to Satan’s lies. The Bible says, “The bread of deceit of is sweet, but afterward your mouth will be filled with gravel.” Dr. R. G. Lee, former pastor of this church, I’ve heard him say on many occasions, “You can eat the devil’s corn if you want to, but he’ll choke you on the cob.” And that’s exactly what happened to this woman. He, she, is the finished product of the devil’s art. She was blinded by Satan. Second Corinthians 4:4: “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe

not.”

III. The Samaritan Woman Was Broken by Sorrow

Not only was she bound by sin and blinded by Satan, but she was broken by sorrow. Look, if you will, in verse 18. She'd had five husbands, and she'd been discarded by these men, like a worn-out garment. She's just thrown aside. You know, sin has its thrills, but it doesn't have its joy. And her life was filled with sadness. It was filled with emptiness. It was filled with disillusionment. Can you imagine this woman, what she must have felt, what she must have been like? Perhaps the cup of sin was sweet, but the dredges were very, very bitter.

And, on top of all of this, her religion had proved a washout to her. Look in verses 19 and 20: The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Now, she was interested in religion, but it's quite obvious that her religion had not changed her life. I mean, she was in the grip of sin, and she now wants to argue religion. And most people in the grip of sin want to argue religion. And don't ever argue religion with a person. You can defend your faith, and you can give reasons for what you believe, but don't argue, religion. You'll generate far more heat than you will light. Jesus didn't argue with this woman, but, thank God, He did meet her questions with a good answer.

People sometimes are so foolish to argue about religion. One man who was a Baptist was trying to get a Methodist to be a Baptist. I wouldn't walk across the street to try to make a Methodist a Baptist, or a Baptist a Methodist, or an Episcopalian a Methodist, or anything else. That's all just different forms of religion. I am interested in leading people to faith in Jesus Christ, for a person to know Jesus. Some people boast that they are dyed-in-the-wool Baptists. You'd better be a washed-in-the-blood Baptist.

One man was talking with a Methodist, trying to get a Methodist to come over to the Baptist Church. And he said, “Well, why are you a Methodist? Why aren't you a Baptist? Why are you a Methodist?” He said, “Well, my father was a Methodist, and his father was a Methodist—so I'm a Methodist.” The man said, “That doesn't make sense. What if your father was a fool, and your grandfather was a fool. Then, what would you be?” He said, “Well, I guess I'd be a Baptist.”

This woman wanted to bring up the religious argument. She just wanted to argue denominations. She said, “Well, you say you worship in Jerusalem. Our fathers say that you ought to worship in Samaria. What do you say?” And then, Jesus gave that wonderful, wonderful answer that He gave, that God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

So I want to talk to you tonight about the ultimate privilege. I want to teach you

tonight and reinforce in you what Jesus taught this woman so long ago, who was bound by sin—this woman who was blinded by Satan, this woman who was broken by sorrow—what Jesus did for this woman, how Jesus pointed her to the life’s ultimate privilege. And I want you to find the same thing. Some of you are listening by radio. Maybe you’ve never, truly been saved. It’s time you stopped enduring religion and started enjoying salvation.

Now, notice her argument again. She’s saying, “Our fathers...—in verse 20—Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

Now, actually, there were two forms of religion. The Samaritans worshiped with zeal. I have been to a Samaritan worship service. They still have an old copy of the Pentateuch. They use the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—and they have an ancient Torah. It’s something to see, these old Samaritans who are still there with this ancient Torah, this manuscript of the Word of God. They have fanciful, weird interpretations, but they worship with a fiery zeal. Sometimes they still make blood sacrifices. And so, the Samaritans had the zeal, but they didn’t have the truth. They rejected all of the Old Testament, except the first five books.

And then, the Jews down in Jerusalem, they were orthodox. They believed the entire Bible. They had the truth, but they didn’t have the zeal. And so, on the one hand, you had dead orthodoxy, and on the other hand you had wildfire and heresy. And so, enthusiastic heresy and lifeless orthodoxy were the only thing this poor woman had known. She’s trying to say, “Shall I choose this, or shall I choose that?” On the one hand, there was heat without light, and on the other hand there was light without heat. And that’s what you see in the City of Memphis today. Some people are frying in fanaticism, and other people are freezing in formalism, but none of them know reality. They don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, our Lord now is going to teach her about true salvation. Thank God you don’t have to have fanatic heresy or dead formalism; you can have life’s ultimate privilege, which is to worship God.

IV. The Steps of Worshiping God

Now, let me give you the steps of worshiping God.

Number one: There must be the right person. All worship must be of the right person. Look in verse 23: “For the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers—not everybody is a true worshiper, you see—when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Now, in that phrase, He uses the word Father twice.

What is idolatry? Idolatry is nothing less than worshiping the wrong god. The Bible tells us, in 1 Corinthians 8 and verse 6, “There is but one God, the Father...” Jesus’ wonderful term for the Almighty is Father. Jesus called God Father more than 70 times in the New Testament. Now, come up close and listen to me. Father is not what God is like; Father is what God is. And these people who try to neuter the Bible, transgender the Bible, make a horrible mistake. God is Father. He’s not like Father. God is a Father.

Now, there are a lot of things about God that you may not understand. You will never understand, as we said this morning, His omnipotence. You cannot understand His omniscience. You cannot fathom His omnipresence, because those things are concepts that are foreign to us. We can believe them. I believe them. But I’d be the first one to say that I do not understand them. Now, we can’t understand those things, but friend, we can experience God’s fatherhood. We can know God as Father.

When I was a little boy, my dad worked for East Coast Motors, and sold Buick automobiles part of the time there in West Palm Beach, Florida. My dad was a good, automobile salesman. And I can remember as a little guy—I mean, a real little guy—I hadn’t started school yet. I would hear my father say to my mother, “I’m going to see a party tonight.” Now, what he meant was, “I have a prospect.” I understand this now that I have grown up. “I have a prospect. I’m going to see him, and talk to him about an automobile, or talk to this lady about an automobile.” But his phrase was, “I’m going to see a party tonight.” I thought my dad was the most blessed man. He got to go to all these parties. Every day, he’s going to a party, going to a party, going to a party. Well, he was speaking of a party as an individual. “I’m going to see a party tonight, or this afternoon.” Point being: I had no idea what my father did. I had no idea about the selling of automobiles, or anything else. I did not understand what he did, but friend, I knew who he was. He was my father, and I knew him intimately. I felt free to sit in his lap, and rub his beard, and do whatever I wanted to do with my dad, to play with him, and tussle with him. He was my father.

And isn’t it great that you don’t have to understand how God regulates the universe, and all about His omnipresence, and how He keeps all of the mighty planets in orbit? You don’t have to understand everything God does to know who God is. Jesus called Him Father. And, if you want to learn how to worship tonight, I want you to think of God as a Father. Worship the right person.

Now, here was a woman who never really understood what love was. She needed somebody to care for her, somebody to love her, somebody to provide for her. She’d been used. She’d been abused. She’d been refused. She’d been discarded. And Jesus spoke to her about a Father.

You know why Jesus came to this earth? To reveal the Father. John 14:9: “Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip:

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. How saith thou then, show us the Father?" Jesus was the living, walking embodiment of God the Father.

Now, if you want to worship, think of God as a Father. Oh, yes, He's holy. We're to respect, we're to honor our father and our mother. But there's no fear in real worship. "Perfect love casteth out fear." We don't come to Him with a dread and a fear. We come to Him as a child would come to his own dear father, for "God has sent forth his Spirit into our hearts, crying, Abba Father." So, number one, you worship the right person.

Number two: You worship in the right place. Look in verse 21: "Jesus saith unto her, Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Now, they had a temple in Jerusalem, and there was a temple in Samaria. But Jesus is teaching what Paul taught in Acts chapter 17, verse 24: "He is the Lord of heaven and earth, and He dwells not in temples made with hands." This building is not a temple. I thank God for it. We're celebrating ten years in this building. But God does not live here any more than He lives out there. God does not dwell in temples made with hands, whether it be in Jerusalem or in Mount Gerizim. And we need to learn that so much.

When I was a kid, I went to Northwood Baptist Church, where I was saved and baptized, and where I was married and ordained. I love the church with all of my heart. But I can remember in the little foyer of that church—it was not a big church building—there was a sign up there, "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." And, by the way, that was taken from the book that I preached from this morning, the Book of Habbakuk. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him"—you remember, I think that's chapter 2 and verse 20—and our people put that up there so that when you go to church—wait a minute, when you step in here, shhhhhh, the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him. There were people who thought it was wrong to clap in church. They thought it was wrong to talk in church. And they come in and say, 'Now, folks, shhhhh. We've come to worship. Get quiet—get quiet. The Lord is in His holy temple.' Well, there are times when we ought to be quiet, but there are times when we ought not to be quiet. The Bible tells us to shout. The Bible tells us to praise. And we Baptists may not like it; the Bible tells us to dance. I mean, look, folks. There's a lot of excitement also to worship. And sometimes I've come into churches, and people say, "You know, I just want everything to be quiet." I like it quiet myself, and I like to be quiet, but, you know, sometimes I like to walk in the building and hear you out there like sparrows in a tree just talking, just enjoying one another, just loving one another.

You know, when I come and see my children together laughing and enjoying one another, that just rejoices my heart—to see them love one another, and to enjoy one another.

You know, we don't have to freeze in fanaticism or fry in formalism. We just worship. And worship is not in a place. You'd be surprised how many people think of this place as "holy." Now, it's dedicated to God, but remember the song that we sang tonight, "This is holy ground"? But did you hear what it said? God is here, and anywhere God is, is holy ground. Now, God's out there also. There are people who would not think of smoking cigarettes in here, but they can't wait to get outside. There are people who would not use bad language in here, but friend, other places they turn the place blue. They say, "Well, I wouldn't use it. This is God's house in here." Look up here. I want to tell you something. *This* is God's house. *This* is God's house. I ought not to do anything, any place, anywhere that would dishonor God. First Corinthians 6, verse 19: "What? Know ye not that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have of God. You're not your own; you are bought with a price." Don't take this temple anywhere, and don't take anything into this temple, and don't say anything around this temple, and don't do anything that would offend the Spirit of God that dwells in you. God doesn't dwell in houses made with hands. We are the temple of God. The sanctuary—this is the sanctuary. And the Bible says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, which temple ye are." And so, the church is the people of God. And Jesus is saying, "The Father seeketh such to worship him." We are the living temple of the living God. And so, thank God that we can come and gather together. We ought to gather together. And the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another." We should never stop coming together to worship. And when we come together to worship, we bring all these temples together. Then, corporately, we become a temple. But, again, it is God in the midst of His people, not God in a building made with hands. And so, the Bible teaches corporate worship.

It's sad that so many people worship and go to the church house about three times: when they're christened as a little baby, and then when they get married, and then for a funeral, when they're hatched, matched, and dispatched. It's about the only time they go to church. But the truth of the matter is we're to be worshiping God every day.

Do you know what makes a worship service great? Listen to me. Not when we come to church to worship, but when we bring our worship to church—when we bring our worship to church. Every day is a holy day. Every place is a sacred place. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, where the Spirit of God is, that is holy ground.

Now, again, I believe in corporate worship. I was talking to some folks today after lunch, and they said, "We have some members of our family who say that they worship, but they don't want to go to church. They just stay and watch on television. And, very frankly, we don't want to be disrespectful to you, Pastor, because we're grateful for the

television ministry, but we wish that they wouldn't just stay on and watch on television. We want them to come to the worship service." If I thought that Love Worth Finding Ministries was keeping people from church, from the worship service, I'd get off the air. I would. I don't want to be a substitute for anybody's corporate worship. I believe in corporate worship. I believe in God's people coming together.

And sometimes people say, "Well, you know, I can get more at home." Well, that's where you have missed it, friend. You don't go to church for what you can get. You go to church for what you can give. We're to be exhorting one another. You see, when I back out of my driveway on Sunday morning to come to this place, you know what I'm saying to all my neighbors? God is important to me. And when I get here with you, you know what I'm saying to you? You are important to me. And what you're saying to those round about you is, "Hey, folks, you folks are important to me, and God is important to me." But let's not try to localize God into a building or into a place.

How do you worship God? Well, number one: You've got to worship. You've got to worship the right person. He is a Father.

And you've got to worship in the right place, and that is any place that you want to worship. Don't be bound to some building, and don't neglect, however, the assembling of yourselves.

Number three: You worship with the right procedure. Look, if you will, in verse 23: "For the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Now, remember that the Samaritans had zeal, but they didn't have the truth. Now, the Jews had the facts, but they didn't have the zeal. And all she had seen were these two options: enthusiastic heresy and dead orthodoxy.

So how are we to worship God? Do you want to worship? Remember—remember—worship is the ultimate privilege—the ultimate privilege. So how do you worship?

Well, number one: You must worship in spirit. Now, here He's not talking about the Holy Spirit. He's talking about the human spirit. Your human spirit is the organ of worship. You worship God in the human spirit. That means that worship is to come from within. You say, "Pastor, do you have a verse for that?" Yes, I do. Romans 1:9: "For God is my witness," Paul says, "whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel." In Psalm 103, verse 1: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." So the Spirit inseparably united with the soul is that which worships God. True worship comes from within. You worship in spirit.

Now, the Holy Spirit must energize the human spirit. My human spirit cannot worship apart from the Holy Spirit. So as I am saved, God sends His Spirit into my heart. And when I'm surrendered, I'm filled with the Spirit. And the Holy Spirit energizes my human spirit. And so, it is a Spirit-filled worship that pleases God. It offers pleasure to God.

Now, perhaps you have some trouble worshiping. Perhaps you say, "Pastor, you

know, I just don't like to worship. As a matter of fact, I get bored at church." Well, let me tell you where your problem is. Your problem is in your spirit. You need to get your spirit tuned up to God. If you don't have a desire to worship spiritually, you're sick. There's something wrong. If church is boring to you, if praise is boring to you, there's something wrong with you. Your spirit is sick.

I have a brother-in-law, Joyce's brother, who, before he came to the Lord, was a playboy—raced boats, drove Jaguar automobiles, a wheeler-dealer businessman. And I would witness to him, and Joyce would witness to him, and he'd just kind of blow it off. And then, he got saved, and he came to hear me preach after he got saved, and he said, "Adrian, man, you sure do preach different than you used to preach." I said, "Gordon, I am preaching the same thing that I've always preached, in the same way. You're just listening with different ears." That's all it is. God had done something in his heart, and now he's just hearing with different ears. And, folks, some folks come to church, and they don't get blessed at all. And other people, they just go away, saying, "My, God was present today."

One man said, "I've never seen my pastor's eyes. When he prays, he closes his, and when he preaches, he closes mine."

These are the kind of people that need to understand that when you get saved and filled with the Spirit, then the human spirit is going to rise up in praise. I can tell when I'm Spirit-filled. I can't help but praise God. I'll just be driving along in the car, just saying, "Jesus, I love You." I just praise the Lord. I'll roll up all the windows, Brother Jim, and sing, and just praise the Lord. You worship in spirit. The human spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, just overflows in praise to God. That's the right procedure. But now, listen.

Jesus said, "not only in spirit, but in truth." And worship is a response built on truth. Psalm 145 and verse 18: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him—to all that call upon him in truth."

Your worship will never rise above your knowledge of God. Jesus said to this woman, "You don't even know what you're worshiping." Now, that's the reason that all true worship services must include the expounding of the Word of God, because worship is the intelligent and loving response to God, and the God who is revealed in the Scriptures. Now, there are some people who think that a worship service is just when we're singing, and when we're praying, and when we're praising, and when we're fellowshiping. But if there's not the exposition of the Word of God, there is an ingredient that is missing in true worship. Worship is both subjective and it is objective. Listen to this scripture—Galatians 3, verse 16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom—the word of Christ now—teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, in hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Do you see the balance? Let the Word of God dwell in you. And when it does, it's going to

come out in songs and hymns and spiritual songs. And, by the way, he mentions here psalms. There is a denomination—I'll not call the name—they don't believe in musical instruments in the Bible. Well, friend, if you sing songs, you've got to sing songs with musical instruments. They were all written for musical instruments. Even the superscription tells you the instruments to do it on. And you worship God with psalms.

Psalm 47, verse 7: "For the Lord is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises—now watch this—sing ye praises with understanding." In spirit and in truth. How wonderful it is—how wonderful it is—when we worship from the depth of our being, with all of the emotion of our souls, and yet, that worship is based on rock-solid Bible truth.

Now, we worship also, not only the right person, and in the right places, in the right procedure, but for the right purpose. Look, if you will, in verse 23: "For the Father seeketh such to worship him." That's what it is all about. God wants you to worship Him.

When I was a younger preacher, I used to come and sit on the platform, and wait for the song service to get over, wait for the praise to end, so I could get up to preach. I always thought of that as preliminaries for the main event. And so, I'm sitting there, and I'm thinking about how many are here today. I'm thinking why doesn't that usher help that woman to get a seat, and want to throw a hymnal at him, and say, 'Hey, you. Help that lady get a seat.' And why doesn't she take that baby out of here, and why, you know. And you're sitting there and wondering how many are in the choir, and this and that. That's an occupational hazard for a preacher. And, one day, I learned, hey, stop that. Worship God. Just worship God. Jim, I sit up there on Sunday morning and just worship God. I have to feel sorry for Mark and Bob, because they have to sit by me and hear me sing. But I'm there to worship God. And there's nothing that gets my heart more prepared to preach than just to come together with my brothers and sisters and worship Him, because that's why we're here. We're here to give Him glory, and to give Him praise. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." The word worship comes from an old English word, worth-ship. It shows what we think of God. One definition of worship is all that we are reacting to all that He is. It is the adoring contemplation of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Now, why does the Father seek such to worship Him? Sometimes people get confused. They think that God must have some king-size ego that He needs people constantly telling Him how great He is, or how glorious He is, or majestic He is. And perhaps God is a little insecure, so He wants us all to keep just praising Him. Friend, your praise doesn't add anything to His glory. Your worship doesn't add anything to His worth. You don't make Him anymore glorious, because He's as glorious as He can ever be, and always will be. He is totally, fully glorious. God wants us to worship Him, not primarily for what worship does for Him, but for what worship does for us. We become like what we worship. That's the reason our President, Bill Clinton, talking about his

escapades, said, “Well, that’s a matter between me and my God.” I think he sees his God in the mirror when he shaves.

What I’m trying to say is this: that, friend, we become like what we worship. When you make an idol, you become like that idol. When you worship the true God, you will be godly. You will be transformed. Second Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18: “But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass—or in a mirror—the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory...” The more you worship the God, the more you become like Him. You spend time in His presence—you’re going to be transformed. That even happens with married people. They say people who live together long enough begin to look like one another. Have you ever thought about that? Joyce is beginning to get worried. We become like those that we stay with. If you spend time with God, you’re going to be like Him.

Now, let me just say that there is a difference between prayer and praise and worship. I think many of us never, ever really meet God in true worship, or seldom do. I’ve often used the illustration a story that I read years ago. There was a woman trapped in an apartment building in a fire. It looked like that she was going to perish in the flames. But a brave policeman went up one of these extension ladders up to the window where she was, at peril of his own life. He took this beautiful girl in his arms, and brought her down to the ground in safety. He saved her life. She’d been up there in the window. She was screaming at the top of her lungs, “Help me. Save me. Help me. Somebody come,” and he went. Later on, she went by the fire department to thank him for saving her life, and they had a cup of coffee together, and they found an affinity for one another. And later on, he asked her to go out, and she did. Later on, they fell in love. Later on, they got married, and went away on a honeymoon. And, in that little story, you have ways that we relate to God the Father.

When she was up there in that window, saying, “Help me. Save me,” that was prayer. Now, it wasn’t prayer to God, but it was analogous to prayer. She’s saying, “I have a need. I need something. Somebody help me. Somebody come to my aid.” And thank God that we have a God who hears our prayers and answers when we call upon Him. That’s prayer. When she went to the fire station, and said, “Thank you for what you did,” that was thanksgiving. And then, when she looked at him and began to marvel at him, that was praise—analogue to praise—in what we’re talking about. But then, when they got married, and went away on their honeymoon, there was a blending of their lives, as two became one, and she gave herself totally, completely to him, as he did to her. That’s analogue to worship. We’re the bride of Christ.

Thank God for prayer. Thank God for thanksgiving. Thank God for praise. And praise is all glorious. But I think praise, in itself, is even just a smidgeon from true worship, when all that I am is given to all that He is—and the Father seeketh such to

worship Him.

So, you don't come to church for what you can get. You don't even come to seek a blessing, although I hope you'll get one. Do you know why you come to church? Psalm 103, verse 1: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Forget about yourself. Worship Him. Bless Him. And then, you're going to have what this woman found, which was living water. Look, if you will, in verses 10 and following, this same chapter—and we're almost finished: "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, then thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Now, in verse 13: "Jesus answered, and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Then the Bible says—and my time is gone—but she had a water pot. If you'll study it carefully, you find out she went back to town, and forgot her water pot, just left it there. Well, really, she had another well. This time, the well was within her. She didn't need that old water pot.

Conclusion

Well, what is life's ultimate privilege? It is to worship the Father. What is life's ultimate duty? It is to worship the Father. But you can't worship Him unless you worship in spirit and in truth.

A man asked a doctor one time, he said, "Doctor, what is the most potent poison that you can think of right now?" The doctor thought for a while. He said, "Well, potassium cyanide. Very deadly, very potent." He said, "Doctor, how deadly is it?" He said, "Well, if you take a bottle of potassium cyanide, and take the cork out, and touch it underneath your tongue where the blood vessels are close," he said, "you would be dead before you could put the stopper back in the bottle." The man said, "That's potent." He said, "Doctor, what if I drank the whole bottle?" He said, "You wouldn't be any more dead." No more dead.

Do you know what some of us are thinking tonight? You know, that sure must have been a bad woman, that woman. Listen, friend. It's not the amount of sin; it's the fact of sin that condemns us all. She is in heaven. And some of you, who are much better morally than she, may miss heaven, because one drop of sin is deadly, and the Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." But I'm here to tell you that the same Jesus that saved this woman so long ago—she's in heaven now—think about it—in heaven now—is the Jesus who will save you tonight.

Bow your heads in prayer. How many of you in this building tonight would say,

“Pastor Rogers, I know that I know that I have met Jesus; He has transformed my life; He has satisfied my thirsty soul; I have in me a well of water that is springing up into everlasting life; I know that I know, because of the witness of the Word and the witness of the Spirit, that I am heaven-born and heaven-bound; I’m saved by the grace of God”? If you can say that and mean it, would you just lift your hand for a moment? Thank you. Now, take it down. Now, those of you who did not lift your hand, I know that you’re interested in the things of God, or you wouldn’t be here. Perhaps you’re saying right now, “Pastor, if a person could know it—if they could—I would like to know it. What must I do?” Well, friend, there’s nothing to earn, nothing to give, except yourself. You just come to Him empty-handed and receive the gift of salvation. And the same Jesus that saved this woman there, instantaneously and eternally, will save you. Why don’t you pray like this? Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me on that cross. Thank You for paying my sin debt with Your blood. Thank You for taking the suffering that is due to me. Thank You for enduring my hell, that I might have Your heaven. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for dying for me. I need you, and I want you. I open my heart right now, and I receive You as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my heart, Jesus. Friend, pray that. If you couldn’t lift your hand, pray it now. Come into my heart, Jesus. Come in right now and save me. And help me, Lord Jesus, to live for You the rest of my life, and give me the courage to make it public. For I pray in Your holy name. Amen.

Give Him Glory

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 5, 1997

Main Scripture Text: John 4:4–24

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Must Worship the Right Person
- II. We Must Worship in the Right Place
- III. We Must Worship with the Right Procedure
- IV. We Must Worship for the Right Purpose

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding the Gospel of John chapter 4, and in just a moment we're going to look at verse 24. For a month now, we're going to be talking about worship; we're going to be having special seminars on worship; we're going to be preaching messages every Sunday morning on worship. The theme of this month is "Give Him Glory," and that's what we want to do. And the way to give Him glory is to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

John chapter 4—look, if you will, in verse 24. Here are the words of Jesus: "Jesus said, God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Now, look up here, and let me ask you a question. Have you ever been in a boring worship service? Be careful how you answer. Listen—you have never been in a boring worship service. You may have been in a boring church service, but if you have been worshiping God, that is one of the most thrilling, exciting, fulfilling, and meaningful things that could possibly happen to you. To learn to worship God in spirit and in truth will turn the monotonous into the momentous. Worshiping Him in spirit and in truth.

Now, listen to me, folks. What we're talking about today is not incidental; it is the bottom line, it is the ultimate priority, it is the highest good to worship Him. It is your—listen—your supreme duty; it is your maximum privilege. Did you get that? It is your supreme duty; it is your maximum privilege. You're going to cheat yourself if you do not listen to this series on worship. You're going to bless yourself if you will drink it in, imbibe, and practice what our Lord teaches about worship.

They asked Jesus, what is the greatest commandment? Now, they asked the greatest teacher, I suppose, the greatest question, and the greatest question would be,

what is the greatest commandment? And the Lord Jesus gave the answer, in Mark chapter 12, verses 29 and 30: “The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment.” One Lord—one love.

Now, if you keep this commandment, you’ll be blessed. If you fail to keep it, you will suffer. In the passage that we have before us, John chapter 4, the word worship is used at least ten times, some form of the word worship. And I believe that it is the definitive passage in all of the New Testament on the subject of worship.

Now, let me give you the background for this statement that Jesus made, in John chapter 4 and verse 24, that God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Lord Jesus is on a journey, and I want you to notice, in verse 4, the Bible says, “And he must needs go through Samaria.”

Now, our Lord is going up to Galilee, and He has been down in the southern part of the land of Israel, down in Judah, and now He has turned northward, and He is going to Galilee. Now, normally, when a Jew of this day and age would go from the southern part to the northern part of the land, he would not go through Samaria. He would take a detour, for two reasons.

Number one, the detour was the easiest way to go down along the banks of the river Jordan where there were not so many sharp and rocky crags, and mountains, and precipitous places to fall. That was the easiest way to travel. But, besides that, they went around Samaria, very frankly, because they did not like the Samaritans. Now, that’s to put it mildly. They abhorred the Samaritans, they hated the Samaritans; and the Samaritans returned the favor. Now, who were the Samaritans, these hostile people there? Well, in the year 721 BC, the people of Israel who had rebelled against the Lord were carried away captive—that’s in the year 721 BC—and now, the captors took the strongest and the best, the most noble, the most educated, the finest of the people away captive, but they left the sick, the weak, the poor, and the illiterate—they left them in the land. They said, We don’t want to bother with you, and so the others were carried away captive.

Well, these people who were left in this land that we call Samaria, they began to intermarry with themselves, and they began to reinforce the gene pool of weakness, and, besides that, some Babylonian stragglers came in, and they began to marry with these Jews who were left behind, and what happened is that you had a mixed race, what some would call a mongrel breed of people—the Samaritans and the Babylonians. And the Babylonians brought their paganism in, and the Jews would have nothing to do with these people. They looked down upon them. They would not even eat out of the

plate that had been eaten out of by a Samaritan, no matter how many times you washed it. Now, the Samaritans wanted to go down to Jerusalem to worship, but they were not allowed, they were told to stay out, so they built their own place of worship, their own house of worship, on a mountain that was there in Samaria called Mount Gerizim. So, you have two places to worship: you have Mount Zion, where the temple was, and then Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans worship.

Now, that's the background. And the Bible says that Jesus must needs go through Samaria. That is, He had a divine appointment, because, as we're going to see in just a moment, there was a woman there who needed redemption—she needed to be saved, she needed the Savior. It was not accidental; it was not incidental; it was fundamentally a purpose of our Lord to go through Samaria to this forsaken place by the Jews and to meet this woman who would've been so despised by the Jews. It was a divine appointment. When I welcomed you today I said you're not here by accident. I believe you are here by divine appointment. I believe that God rules over everything. I believe not a blade of grass moves without His permission, and I believe that God has every one of us here by divine appointment, because we, like this woman of old, are going to meet the Savior here in this place.

Now, let's continue to read and see what happened here. And, verse 5: "Then he cometh to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now, Jacob's well was there." By the way, I've been to Jacob's well on a number of occasions. That well is still there; it's one of the most authentic places in the Holy Land. "Now, Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well, and was about the sixth hour, there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink, for His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat, that is to buy food. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh a drink of me"—you can almost hear a snarl in her voice as she says this—"which am a woman of Samaria?" Now, it's bad enough that she was a Samaritan; but she was a woman of Samaria, and the women of this day were looked down upon, and denigrated. And she says, Why are you talking to me? You're a Jew, I'm a Samaritan—and besides that, I'm a woman.

And then, she goes on to explain it, as if He didn't know, "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou would've asked of Him and He would've given thee living water. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep." And, by the way, the well is very deep. I've been there; I can testify to that. "From whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou

greater than our father Jacob which gave us the well and drank thereof himself and his children and his cattle? Jesus answered, and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; the water that I shall give him shall be with him a well of water springing up again to everlasting life.

The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Now, Jesus saith unto her, Go call thy husband and come hither.” And this woman, if she was able to blush, she blushed, because “the woman answered, and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands.” Today, we’d give her an Academy Award, wouldn’t we? “Thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband,”—that is, now she’s just living with a man without even the benefit of a marriage ceremony—“and that saidest thou truly.” Jesus said, you’re telling the truth when you say, I have no husband. “The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet”—and I’m going to stop there for just a moment, but I want you to notice this divine appointment.

Here was a woman; she was bound by sin. Here was a woman who had really a thirsty soul, it was God that she was thirsting for, but she had gone from husband to husband, she had gone from affair to affair, and it had all turned to dust in front of her, and she’s now just sort of a faded flower. She’s living now with a man without even the benefits of marriage; she has become the dirty plaything of, I suppose, a dirtier man. You know what people would call that today? The new morality.

Well, we can tell from John chapter 4 it’s not new and certainly not moral. And we have the same thing today and Hollywood is leading the pack. By the way, when people talk about reforming Hollywood, I think it’d probably be easier to run a soda shop in hell than to reform Hollywood. If it happens, that would be wonderful, but that’s not where I’m pinning my hopes on, I’ll tell you the truth. These actresses, with faces like angels and morals like alley cats, are becoming the entertainment in America today, and people are having their filth piped right into their living room.

Well, here was this woman—she was bound by sin. Don’t envy these people who live in this lifestyle; pity them, pity them. I thank God for Christian homes, a godly marriage, and, friend, that’s what you ought to strive for, and that’s what you ought to build, by the grace of God. But she was bound by sin, because she’d been blinded by Satan. Satan had lied to her. Satan said, this is the way you’re going to find satisfaction, lady.

Dr. Robert G. Lee, the late great pastor of this church, used to say, you can eat the devil’s corn if you want to, but he’ll choke you on the cob. The devil, as he said, offers

high wages, but he pays in counterfeit money. The Bible says, the bread of deceit is sweet, but afterward a man's mouth shall be filled with gravel. Satan has blinded this woman, and now she's just broken by sorrow, she's been discarded by these men like some kind of a worn-out garment. Sin has its thrills, but it doesn't have its joys. Sin thrills, but it kills. It fascinates, then it assassinates. And here she was! Here she was—bound by sin, blinded by Satan, broken by sorrow—but Jesus must needs go through Samaria.

This was a divine appointment, and Jesus begins to talk to this woman about living water, about drinking from the well of salvation—himself, the fountain of living water. Now, what she did was what many people do when you start to zero in on their spiritual needs: she began to argue denominations. She said, Now, wait a minute—you're a Jew; we're Samaritans. The Jews worship in Jerusalem, the Samaritans worship in Samaria; the Jews worship on Mount Zion, we worship on Mount Gerizim—which is the right place to worship? Did you ever notice how people want to argue denominationalism rather than talk about salvation? Which is the right place to worship?

I heard about a man, they were saying—you know, she's saying we worship here because our fathers worshiped here, our father Jacob worshiped here, and our fathers are telling us this is the right place to worship—a Baptist was talking to a Methodist, trying to get the Methodist to be a Baptist, and the Baptist said to the Methodist, Why are you a Methodist? Why aren't you a Baptist? He said, Well, I'm a Methodist because my father was a Methodist and his father was a Methodist—so I'm a Methodist. The Baptist said, That doesn't make sense. What if your father was a fool, and your grandfather was a fool, then what would you be? He said, Well, I guess I'd be a Baptist! People just want to argue religion. That's what this woman is doing. She's saying, where should we worship? Look in verse 20: "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Now, Jesus now begins to talk to her about what I want to talk to you about today, and that is the subject of worship. Oh, what this woman needed was an encounter with the living God, and that encounter is called worship.

Now, this woman only had two alternatives. The only alternatives, at least, that she knew of. That is, she could worship in Mount Gerizim, the place of worship there that the Samaritans had built, or she thought maybe in Jerusalem. Now, these were the two options of that day. Let me tell you what they were like. The Samaritans worshiped with zeal. As a matter of fact, there are still a few Samaritans alive today, do you know that? I have been to this place, and I've been up on Mount Gerizim, and I've met some Samaritans. There are some real live, living Samaritans today. Just a handful of them, just a few hundred of them, that are still living today, still worshipping there.

Now, let me tell you about the Samaritans. The Samaritans rejected most of the Old Testament. They only kept five books of the Old Testament, what we call the Pentateuch. The rest of them, they said, oh, we won't have anything to do with them. So they rejected primarily a good part of the Word of God—but you talk about worshiping with fervor and zeal, they still do that. They still make animal sacrifices today. These Samaritans have a zeal, but not according to knowledge. Now, that's the kind of worship they have in Samaria. Now, the Jews, they worship in Jerusalem. They believed all of the Bible of that day, of the Old Testament. They believed it from Genesis to Malachi, they believed it all, and they worshiped there in the Temple; but their religion was dead, dead as a wedge. Jesus said, Isaiah prophesied of you, This people honoreth me with their lips but their heart is far from me.

So what you have here on the one hand is uninformed zeal, and on the other hand dead orthodoxy. Now, that's what you have today, folks, all around, if you look around. By and large, we have basically the same thing today when people are trying to worship. The Samaritans worshiped in ignorance, but they had zeal; the Jews had the truth, but they rejected the spirit. And thank God we don't have to choose between enthusiastic heresy or lifeless orthodoxy. And so, this woman had these two options—two options: they had the heat without light, light without heat; to fry in fanaticism, or to freeze in formalism; but neither one of them knew the truth of what it is to worship.

Now, with that as a background, I want you to look now at the Word, in verse 21: “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain”—that is, in Mount Gerizim where they were—“nor yet in Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship, ye know not what”—that is, you've got ignorant worship. “We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews”—they have the truth. But now notice verse 23: “But the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit”—that's what the Samaritans specialized in—“and in truth”—that's what the Jews specialized in—“for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

I. We Must Worship the Right Person

Now, with that in mind, I want to talk to you about worship today. What is worship in spirit and in truth? Very quickly, I hope you'll get these facts down. Fact number one: we must worship the right person for it to be true worship. Look, if you will, in verse 23—the Bible says, “For the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” You must worship the right person, and who is the right person? The Father. Idolatry is to worship the wrong god. First Corinthians chapter 8, verse 6, says, “There is but one God, the Father.” There is but one God. Now, we have people today who don't want to call God the Father. They

say they want to call God Mother—some foolish people have even rewritten the Bible to call God the Father, Mother God, and all of this theological garbage—and that’s what it is, folks; I hate to tell you this, but sheer garbage. God is Father. There is one God, the Father. That’s what the Word of God says. Now, if that offends you, you come apologize to me after the service, and I’ll forgive you.

Friend, that’s just what the Bible says. God is Father. The Father is not what God is like; the Father is what God is—that is the very nature of God. That does not demean or demote anybody; it just simply means that God is Father. You know what we’re seeing today? A subtle move from Father God to Mother Earth. Did you notice that? From Father, and, beyond that, some to Uncle Sam, from Father God to Mother Earth to Uncle Sam; but, friend, we must worship the right person. The Father seeketh such to worship Him.

Did you know that Jesus called God the Father more than seventy times in the Gospels? It was His favorite term for the Almighty. Now, that blesses me—that blesses me—because I’ve been thinking about the nature of God. You think about His omnipotence, His mighty power—He can do anything. You think about His omniscience—He knows everything. You think about His omnipresence—He’s everywhere. Somebody said that God is a circle who centers everywhere and who circumferences nowhere. That’s a mind-boggling thought—that’s His omnipresence. Those are great big double-jointed words, and many of us can’t understand that, many of us can’t relate to that; but the Father we can relate to, isn’t that right? The Father seeketh such to worship Him.

When I was a little guy, a little kid, my daddy sold automobiles; he sold Buick automobiles for East Coast Motors, down in West Palm Beach, Florida. And I can see it right now in my mind’s eye as I’m thinking about it, seeing my dad as he would get his black leather folder that he would have, with his prospects and so forth in it, put his papers in there. I never knew what those papers were all about, but I was fascinated by that thing, and it looked almost like a ladies’ purse—it was folded over, it was black leather, and it had a snap on it. He had his papers in there. He’d put that in his hand, and he’d walk out of the house in the morning, kiss my mama goodbye—I have no earthly idea where he went, what he did; I didn’t know any of that. And when he would come back home, I would welcome him home. Folks, I didn’t have to know what he did, or how he did it, to know him and love him—did you know that?—or experience his love for me. He was my daddy.

I don’t understand where God goes when He goes to work, how He flings out the stars, and scoops out the oceans, and heaps up the mountains, and runs this mighty universe. There are a lot of things about God I don’t know, and that doesn’t bother me—

and you don't know, either. You don't know—who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath known His counsel? You don't have to know for Him to be your Father, is that not true? You don't have to know all that your Father does for Him to be your Father. Little children can look to Him, and say, Father. And the Bible teaches that when we get saved, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. So, if you worship, number one, you must worship the right person. The Father seeketh such to worship Him.

II. We Must Worship in the Right Place

Number two, not only must you worship the right person; you must worship in the right place—the right place. Now, where is the place? Well, is the place Jerusalem? Not necessarily. Is the place Mount Gerizim? Not necessarily. It could be, but what Jesus is now teaching is that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. That's what the apostle Paul said, in Acts chapter 17, verse 24: "God that made the world and all things therein, saying He is the Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Now, it's very important that you understand this. Folks, you don't have to be inside this building to worship God—did you hear that? As a matter of fact, we make a big mistake when we call a church a temple, or when we call a church a sanctuary. Now, I guess, I say it's a big mistake—I guess if we accept it in the common parlance of today, it may not be an egregious mistake; but technically, this is not a temple, and, technically, this is not a sanctuary. A sanctuary is a holy place. Now, you say, isn't this place holy? Well, yes, but you're still missing what I'm saying. When you get saved, every place is holy; everything is sacred.

When I was a little boy, I used to go to a very wonderful church, the church I got saved in, baptized in, married in, ordained in—the church building, that is—and, as you walked in the door of that very small auditorium, there was a sign over the door, and it said this: The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silent before Him. Boy, when I walked in there, I mean, I've come in to the holy place. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not putting down that place; I am grateful for that place—that's why I'm saved. And I'm not putting down this place—it has been given over and dedicated to the worship of God and the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ; it belongs to Jesus—don't get me wrong, now. Don't think I'm putting this place down. But, folks, you want to know where the sanctuary is now? Right here, right here—that's what Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God?" God lives in me; God lives in you. You know there are people who wouldn't think of defiling *this* place who would defile *this* place. I mean, some of you would not smoke in here, but, as soon as you get out, you light up. You say, I

wouldn't smoke in there—that's the church. Well, friend, you're the sanctuary. Some of you would not use language in here that you would use out there. Why is that? If you had to defile either one—and I pray God you'll not defile either one—but it'd be far better to defile this than to defile this, wouldn't it? See, you're the temple of God.

And so this woman said, where are we going to worship? Are we going to worship over here in Mount Gerizim or are we going to worship down there in Jerusalem? Jesus said, here's where you worship: right here. God is a spirit—God is spirit—and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. And so where do we worship? Any place, any time. What a privilege we have. I want you to put your bookmark there in John chapter 4, and turn, if you will, to Hebrews chapter 10 with me for just a moment. In Hebrews chapter 10, let me show you something wonderful about the privilege that you and I have to worship our Lord at any time in any place. In Hebrews chapter 10, look with me in verse 19, if you will, please. And the Bible says, "Having therefore brethren, boldness, enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Pastor, what does that mean? Well, when He says, the holiest, it's talking about the Holy of Holies in the temple, or in the Tabernacle. Nobody would dare go in there unless they were the high priest, and the high priest could only go in once a year, and when he went in he went in with a basin of blood, and with fear and trembling, lest he do something wrong and God strike him dead. That's where the Shekinah glory of God was; that's where the Ark of the Covenant was; that was the most holy place in the temple; and it's called the holiest. But now he talks to us, brothers and sisters in Christ, "having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest,"—how do we enter? Not with a basin of blood, but with the blood of Jesus—"by a new and a living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Everything in that Old Testament was just a picture of our Lord, and the veil pictured our Lord. The holy place and the Holy of Holies—there was a holy place and the holiest place, or the Holy of Holies—was separated by a veil. That veil was about six inches thick, in the temple, and the veil had four colors. It was white, and it was blue, and it was scarlet, and it was royal purple. Must've been a beautiful thing. And you remember the Bible says that when Jesus was crucified—you read about it there in Matthew chapter 27—there was an earthquake, and that veil was torn from the top to the bottom—remember that? It was torn asunder. And so, people could not walk right in to the Holy of Holies, but this was done when Jesus shed His blood, to make a way into that holy place.

Now, listen to this very carefully. That veil pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the colors pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. White spoke of His sinlessness. The blue spoke of the fact that He's the Son of God from heaven. The red spoke of the fact that He

would shed His blood upon this earth, and that He was a man as well as God. But, if you take the scarlet red and the blue and blend them together, you get purple, which shows His royalty; and, when you look at the purple, you can't tell where the blue ends and where the red begins. And, when you look at the Lord Jesus, you can't tell where His deity ends and His humanity begins; or His humanity begins and His deity ends. He's the God-Man. That veil was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ; it was a picture of His body, and just as His body was torn on that cross, that veil was torn, and made a way into the Holy of Holies.

Now, folks, listen. You and I have that privilege to go into the holy place that the Old Testament Jews never had—not in Jerusalem, not in Mount Gerizim—there is a new and a living way in spirit and in truth through the Lord Jesus Christ. We go right into the Holy of Holies. Now, I'm going to let you in on a secret. I've already been in there this morning, and I hope that you have. I hope that you know the joy, the privilege, of going in to that holy place.

Now, worship is any time, any place that you will enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, you must worship the right person; you must worship in the right place. Every day is a holy day; every place is a sacred place. You say, well now, Pastor, does that mean that we're not to come here anymore to worship? Oh, no, if you continue to read in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 24, it says we're not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Don't ever forsake this. If you do that, you'll sin against God, for God has commanded you not to forsake the assembling. As a matter of fact, if you forsake the assembly, if you don't come to the assembly, in the Bible it is a mark that you're not saved, that you never really believed, that you've gone back to perdition.

Now, coming to church doesn't save you. Billy Sunday used to say, Going to church won't make you a Christian any more than going in the garage will make you an automobile. I agree with that. Coming to church doesn't save you, but when people willingly, definitely, deliberately, carelessly, callously neglect the house, the place of the assembling, in the New Testament days, it was a sign that they'd never ever truly been saved. They went out from us, but they were not of us. So, where's the place of worship? Any time, any place—but there is something significant also about our coming together to worship.

But now, listen very carefully. Brother Whitmire, I hope we can teach our people this, in these things on worship: the significance of coming here is not primarily that we come to worship, but that we bring our worship to church. We bring our worship. In other words, we have been with the Lord all week long, and so, when we come together, all of us, full of God, we don't come here to get filled up—we're already full of God; we come

here to celebrate together.

Why do we come together? Why do we come to corporate worship? Do you know what you're saying when you're here today? And I'm so glad you are. You're saying two things. Number one, you're saying, God is important to me; and you're saying, you people are important to me; my brothers and sisters in Christ are important to me. That's why we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, but we absorb one another. It fires me up to meet this man; I hope it fires him up to meet me. You blessed me today, choir—by the way, you really did, you blessed me today—and musicians and others. As we worship, as I look out there and look at your face; and those of you who are smiling and nodding and saying amen, that is a blessing to me. The Bible says, we exhort one another. Now, you must worship the right person, you worship in the right place—every day is a holy day, every ground is sacred ground—but we still assemble together as brothers and sisters in Christ, bringing our worship, to our Lord.

III. We Must Worship with the Right Procedure

Now, here is the next thing I want you to see: we worship with the right procedure. We worship our Lord in spirit and in truth. Now, what does it mean to worship in spirit? He's talking about the human spirit here; he's talking about your spirit. You don't just worship God with your hands and your knees and your eyes and your mouth; that's involved, but it's got to come from within, you've got to serve God with your spirit. That's what the apostle Paul said, in Romans 1 verse 9: "God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit." That's the reason the Psalmist said, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

Now, if you don't enjoy a worship service like this, and, very frankly, I know that some of you are here because somebody asked you to come, some of you are passing notes, some of you are reading—I couldn't be around this long without knowing that. I know what you're doing—some of you are planning your menu, you're out to lunch already—I know that, I know that—hey, I wasn't born yesterday—but I'm going to tell you your problem, I'm going to tell you your problem: it's not primarily with the preacher—you remember I said, if you've ever been in a boring worship service—one woman said, I've never seen my pastor's eyes; when he prays, he closes his, and when he preaches, he closes mine. Hey, listen. Let me tell you something, folks: the problem is in your heart; if worship seems boring to you, if a service like this seems boring to you, you just don't have the right stuff.

You see, you have to worship God in spirit, and to worship God in spirit, the Holy Spirit has to be in your spirit, because it's the Holy Spirit, God has sent forth His Spirit into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. And if you don't enjoy coming to church, if it's

tedious and tasteless to you, and a bore to you, and a drag to you, there's nothing wrong with you that an old-fashioned revival, or a good dose of salvation, wouldn't cure. That's right! Worship in spirit, and then you worship in truth—in truth.

Now, you don't choose the Samaritan way, you don't choose the Jerusalem way; you choose the Jesus way, which is worship in spirit and in truth. Psalm 145, verse 18: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, all that worship Him in truth." That's why we always here at Bellevue have an exposition of the Word of God. Some say, oh, I just want to worship; I just want to sing and pray and praise and fellowship and da da da da da, and you don't worship in truth. Real worship has a theological base, and your worship rises no higher than your concept of God; and you worship in spirit, but you must worship in truth.

I was reading on the airplane last week down there in Clearwater, Florida, people are coming by the thousands—maybe you saw this, it was in USA Today. People are coming by the thousands to look at a plate glass window in an automobile dealer agency where some water from the sprinkler made a chemical image of the Virgin Mary, so they say, and they're coming by thousands to worship the water on plate glass. That's right! Hey, folks, pardon me, but, but that's not too bright. I used to use another word, but my wife said, don't use that word anymore. We worship God in spirit, from our hearts, and in truth, based on the Word of God. The right person—listen to me, folks—you worship right—in the right place, anywhere, anytime—because you're a temple of God. Then, you worship with the right procedure—in spirit and in truth.

IV. We Must Worship for the Right Purpose

And here's the final thing—and listen very carefully: You worship for the right purpose. Now, what is the right purpose? For the Father seeketh such to worship Him. I'm sick and tired of people saying, Well, I didn't get anything out of it. Well, you didn't come to get anything out of it, if you came for a right reason; you came to put something into it. I want to get a blessing. You read the Bible and find out how many times the Bible says we're to bless the Lord. Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Here's a secret, folks: when you forget about yourself, and you begin to worship Him, there'll be blessings all over you. When you stop trying to be blessed, and start worshipping God. There's a chorus that we sing—Forget about yourself and worship Him! That's the purpose of it.

Conclusion

And this poor woman, who had a thirsty soul, finally found what she was thirsty for.

Friends all around me are trying to find what the hearts yearns for, by sin undermined. I have the secret, I know where 'tis found; true pleasures only in Jesus abound.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Friend, there was a thirsty woman so long ago, and she met the Savior, and He satisfied her deepest longing. I know right now that there's a thirst in your heart if you don't know Jesus. Now, put away—put away—your foolish thoughts right now. Don't let the devil distract you right now. God brought you here to be saved, and if you're not saved right now this moment, you can give your heart to Jesus and be saved. I want you to pray this prayer.

Dear God...—just pray right now—Dear God, I know that you love me. I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me, and you promised to save me, if I would only trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Would you pray that prayer? I do trust you, Jesus. Right now, this moment, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray that from the depth of your being: Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, save me, Lord Jesus. Now, thank Him for doing it. Pray this way: Lord, I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I just stand on your Word. Thank you for saving me, and help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen. Now, look up here.

A Drink That Satisfies

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 14, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 4:6–10, 19–24

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

JOHN 4:14

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and be finding John, the fourth chapter? And if you didn't bring a Bible with you, look there in the pew rack in front of you. Most likely there's one there. Find the Gospel of John chapter 4 and then look up here, if you will, for just a moment. I just appreciate you bringing God's Word and using it during these services.

You know, there's not all that much to watch on television anymore. About the only thing worth seeing these days are the commercials. I do enjoy the commercials. Some of them are quite good, but there are some of them, they don't tell the truth, and they really do twist things. There's a certain beer commercial, for example, and it's a well done commercial: these fellows, I believe, have been out fishing, and it's the end of one

of those big days, you know. They're with their buddies, and they've really had a catch. They've pulled the boat up there by the shore, and there's a roaring, crackling fire. And the sun is westering and going down, and they're frying those fish. And they've got that brand of embalming fluid, whatever it is, there, you know, and they're sitting there holding up a big foamy one. And they're with their buddies; and one of them looks at the other one and he says, "You know, it just doesn't get any better than this."

Have you seen that? Somebody look intelligent. Yeah, you've seen that one. All right, I don't want to feel like the only guy that watches that. But anyway, he just says, "It doesn't get any better than this." And my thought is, "Oh, fellow, if that's as good as it's going to get for you, I really do feel sorry for you—I really do." You see, to him, that's what they call in business "the bottom line." I mean, that's it; that is everything. There are good friends, and a day of catching fish and relaxation and getting a little high and all of that. That's it to him; that's the bottom line.

What is the bottom line for you? I mean, for you, what do you think is the absolute best—I mean, when you would say, "It doesn't get any better than this"? What is the highest attainment that a human being can come to? May I tell you what it is? Save your little thinking, if you haven't already discovered it is to worship God "*in spirit and in truth*"—to truly worship God.

I want you to look in our scripture, and I want you to see what the Lord Jesus told a Samaritan woman so long ago. I'm reading here in John chapter 4 and verse 19: "*The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:19–24) Now here the Lord Jesus talked about worship. And I want to talk about worship today under the heading "A Drink That Satisfies."

Now I want to give you the background. The Lord Jesus is on a sixty-mile journey. Of course, He doesn't have an automobile, or a motorcycle, or anything; He's traveling by foot. And the Bible says in the early part of the fourth chapter of John that "*he must needs go through Samaria.*" (John 4:4) Now that didn't mean that He had to go because of geography. He could have gone another way. And by the way, most of the Jews, when they traveled in that day, did go another way, because the way that Jesus went was through the mountains. I've been through the mountains on that same road going to Samaria on a bus; and, folks, it's tiresome on a bus—much less walking around

those curves, and over those steep crevices, and so forth. But Jesus went through Samaria.

Besides that, Samaria was a very hostile country. The Samaritans cared very little for the Jews, and vice versa, as we're going to show you in a moment. But Jesus "*must needs go through Samaria.*" That is, He had a divine appointment. You know, the Bible says, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.*" (Psalm 37:23) And so it was by divine guidance that the Lord Jesus went through Samaria, because there He had an appointment made by God with a wayward woman. I say she was a wayward woman. Folks, she had been married five times, and she was now sleeping around with a man that wasn't even her husband. And Jesus, I believe, went through Samaria, that He might meet that wayward woman and change her from a wayward woman to a liberated lady, because she was set free by the Lord Jesus Christ—one of the most delightful stories of salvation in all of the Bible.

I. **A Wayward Woman**

Now this woman, this woman of Samaria, had become a slave of Satan. I suppose Satan had told her that he was going to liberate her, and Satan had said, "Now, you just follow me, and I'm going to show you the way of fulfillment." At that time she was young and gullible and pretty, perhaps. No woman could have been married that many times without having something, and so I just imagine she was what we would call today a "looker." And he whispered in her ear and said, "Now, you pretty young thing, I'm going to show you how to get the most out of life; I'm going to set you free." But he made her a slave.

1. **She Was a Slave to Her Sin**

In the first place, she was a slave to sin. She had gone from husband to husband to husband to husband, and they had discarded her like worn-out clothing. And here she is in the grip of her sin now, living with a man that wasn't even her husband. You see, folks, the new morality, that's not new; it's one of the oldest things around. And it's not morality; it is immorality. We had it then; we have it today. She was pretty. She had a face like an angel, but she had morals like an alley cat. And she was a slave to her sin. Now I'm sure there were times when she wanted to do better. I'm sure there were times when she wanted to break loose. But she didn't have the power to break loose, because Satan had put the iron bands and chains of slavery upon her. The Bible says, "*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*" (John 8:34)

2. **She Was a Slave to Her Sorrow**

But not only was she a slave to her sin; she was also a slave to her sorrow. I mean, you don't have to read this entire chapter but one time to see here was a dejected,

disillusioned, rejected, frustrated, sorrowful woman. The devil had promised her much, but he had paid her little. Dr. Lee used to say, “The devil offers high wages, but he pays with counterfeit money.” And here she had found that the *“bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.”* (Proverbs 20:17) And the dregs of the cup of sin had become bitter to her, and her heart was filled with sorrow. I want to tell you something else, young people. Don’t you envy the people who are living in sin and immorality. It never brings joy. Sin has its thrills, but it doesn’t have any lasting joy. And this woman was a monument to the lies of the devil.

3. She Was a Slave to Superstition

But not only was she a slave to sin; not only was she a slave to sorrow; but to compound it all, she was a slave to superstition, because Jesus said to her in the verse that I just read, verse 22, “You worship what you don’t know.” (John 4:22) I mean, here she was religious; she worshipped, but she didn’t know the God she worshipped. She had superstition, she had a form of godliness, but there was no power there to deliver her poor superstitious religion. She had tried it, and it failed her. It had no joy, no strength to bring her satisfaction. That’s the reason why she continued on in her sin. Everybody needs to be satisfied; and she couldn’t find it in superstition, so she tried to find it in sin. And not only that, not only did it give her no satisfaction; it gave her no strength. Even when she tried to use her religion to overcome her sin, it was just a pathetic religion. She had a form of godliness, but she denied the power thereof. (2 Timothy 3:5) She did not know the Lord.

Now it was to this woman that the Lord Jesus Christ came. Jesus Christ was there at a certain spot, the well in Samaria at Shechem. I’ve been to that well. That well is still there. I have drunk water out of that well. It’s one of the most authentic spots in all of Israel. And Jesus on His journey sat there. The Bible says, *“Jesus...sat thus on the well.”* (John 4:6) He was tired and hot and thirsty, because He was just as human as you are human. Now that doesn’t mean He wasn’t divine, because He was also God. But He was God in a human body, and that human body was tired. And He sat there on the curbing on the well, and He was thirsty.

Now this woman comes. It was high noon. Now, you see, because she was an outcast, a woman of ill repute, she did not come when the other women would come at the morning to draw the water from the well. She came at high noon, because she had been isolated, outcast, recriminated, despised, looked down upon. And she came, and Jesus said to her, *“Give me to drink.”* (John 4:7) Boy, she spat fire at Him. Her eyes flashed fire. She said, *“How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?”* (John 4:9) Boy, the sparks started to fly. Jesus said, *“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”* (John 4:10) And then a

conversation got started in which the Lord Jesus Christ brought that woman to Himself.

And I want you to see today how the Lord Jesus Christ kept pressing the issue and how the Lord Jesus Christ did not quit; how the Lord Jesus Christ, the master soul winner, kept bringing Himself and His wonderful salvation to this woman. He had some barriers that He had to overcome.

A. **The Racial Barrier**

The first barrier is what I want to call the racial barrier. Look again with me, if you will, in God's Word right here, and look in verse 9—John chapter 4, verse 9: *“Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?”*—and then John explains it—*“for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”* (John 4:9) She said, “You're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan. Why are you asking a drink from me?” You see, there was animosity and racial hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Who were the Samaritans? Well, they were a remnant of the ten tribes that lived in the north—the ten tribes of Israel. When the Assyrians came down in 722 and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they took the strongest and the wealthiest and the healthiest of the Jews and carried them into captivity. They left a remnant of those ten tribes there. Who did they leave? The ones who were sick, the ones who were weak, the ones who were diseased, the ones who were crippled, the ones who were impoverished, they left them; the ones who were not completely mentally alert, they left them in the land. They didn't want to be bothered with them. Then, later on, the Assyrians, in order to replenish the land, sent some Assyrians back in there. Those feeble Jews intermarried with the Assyrians and they became a half-breed race, a mongrel race. Now the pureblooded Jews of that day looked down upon them, and the Bible says, *“The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”* There was a racial animosity, and Jesus had to overcome that racial animosity. Though He was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan, Jesus had to make certain that she understood the fact that the gospel is for everybody.

Now I want you to listen to me today. Jesus is not just the white man's Savior. Jesus is not just the black man's Savior. Jesus is not just the red man's Savior. Jesus is not just the yellow man's Savior. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children, and the big children, of this world. And we had better learn that, dear friend. He is the universal Savior.

Now old Simon Peter had been a little prejudiced, and God sent Simon Peter down there to talk to Cornelius. And God told Simon Peter what Simon Peter needed to know. Peter was a Jew. Cornelius was a Gentile. But Peter said in Acts chapter 10, *“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”* (Acts 10:43) Listen: *“For there is no difference between the*

Jew and the Greek.” (Romans 10:12) *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13)

“Pastor, do you think that somebody is lost because they are a Jew?” No. “Do you think, Pastor, somebody is saved because he’s a Gentile?” A person is saved or lost by what he does with Jesus Christ. Jew or Gentile, bond or free—it makes no difference, dear friend. It is not a matter of race; it’s a matter of grace. And the Bible teaches that when somebody has Christ, he’s saved; if he doesn’t have Christ, he’s lost. Jesus had to overcome the racial barrier.

B. The Resentment Barrier

But not only the racial barrier—in verse 9 you can see it there; also, He had to overcome the resentment barrier, because she spat fire at Him. I mean, you can just hear the bitterness, the hostility. Oh, she had no time for Him: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask water of me, a woman of Samaria?” Boy, you can feel the hostility. She had been rejected. She had been put down. She had been discriminated against so long that her heart was filled with hatred and bitterness for every Jew that she met. I want to tell you something, friend. Do you know what prejudice is? It is judging a person before you know that person; it is judging a person for something other than what he himself is. You see, she was judging Jesus by the other Jews of that day that she had heard about.

Don’t you let somebody prejudice you against the Lord Jesus Christ. You may have heard of some Christian, some church, some denomination, some cult, somebody else, and because they happen to be a Christian, and Jesus Christ is our leader, they have a prejudice against Jesus. There were people that were prejudiced—she was prejudiced—against Jesus in that day because of His brethren. There may be people today who are prejudiced against Jesus because of some of us. Do you know what Mahatma Gandhi said? He said, “I would have been a Christian, if it were not for the Christians.” Boy, what an indictment! But I want to tell you, my dear friend, you may find some fault in some Baptist, some Methodist, some Presbyterian, some Roman Catholic; but you’ll never find any fault in the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t you let anybody, any place, anywhere, cause in your heart a prejudice that will keep you from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. He had to overcome that barrier, not only of race, but that barrier of resentment.

C. The Barrier of Reputation

And then there was another barrier He had to overcome: there was the barrier of reputation, because here was a woman with a bad reputation. I mean, folks, she was what some would call “trash”—married five times, first cousin to Elizabeth Taylor, now

living with a man without even the benefit of a marriage ceremony. She had given up on that. And in that day—let me tell you something, folks—men just didn't talk to women on the streets. And Jesus was what we call a "rabbi." And the Jewish tradition said that a rabbi should not speak to a woman in public, even his own wife. And here was a fallen woman; here was what we call a "streetwalker." And the Lord Jesus Christ overcame that: her reputation.

I just like the way the Bible is written. I'm going to give you a Bible fact. You know, everybody learns one fact in every message, and here's my Bible fact for this morning: Chapter 4 follows John chapter 3. Have you got that? Okay, that's a fact. All right now, listen. John chapter 4 follows John chapter 3. And that's just so wonderful the way God has put that together. What do you have in John chapter 3? Someone was converted in John chapter 3. Who was it? Nicodemus. Who? The ruler of the Jews. Boy, I want to tell you, if there was ever a high and mighty muckety-muck, it was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, a group of only seventy-one in all Israel. He was a man who had learning; he had position; he had ancestry; he had reputation—he had it all. He was a very, very self-righteous, very religious man. And do you know what Jesus Christ told Nicodemus in John chapter 3? He said, "Nicodemus, if you don't get born again, you'll never see the kingdom of God"—*"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3)

Now there was a self-righteous man—John 3—an *up-and-out*. Jesus told him he had to be saved. (John 3:7) In John 4, there's a *down-and-out*, and Jesus tells her she has to be saved. I just think that's so wonderful that the Bible puts that side by side. Do you know why? Listen to me now. When I'm talking about this Samaritan woman, there may be some of you who just wrap your robes of self-righteousness about you and you say, "Well, I don't need to be saved like she did." Let me tell you something, friend. When Jesus put these two chapters side by side—Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman—do you know what He was telling us? Are you listening? With Nicodemus He was telling us there is nobody so good he doesn't need to be saved, and with the Samaritan woman He was showing us there is nobody so bad they cannot be saved. Isn't that wonderful? I don't care what your reputation; I care not what your repute, whether you be religious and self-righteous like Nicodemus, whether you be fallen and down in sin like this Samaritan woman; I want to tell you, there's not a stain, not a blot, not a blur, not a blemish that comes across a human soul but that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse and wash and make whiter than snow. Hallelujah! And Jesus overcame all of those things, and He just kept on pressing the point to bring salvation to this woman.

II. A Well of Water

The second thing I want you to notice: Not only do I want you to notice what I call a

wayward woman, but I want you to notice, secondly, what I want to call a well of water. The Lord Jesus was the master soul winner, and so the Lord Jesus just used what was at hand. He was a great teacher, and He saw that well, He saw that water, and He used that as an illustration of Himself. You see, the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 12 and verse 3, *“Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”* (Isaiah 12:3) And actually, in the Hebrew, although it’s translated “wells,” it’s in the singular: *“Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the [well] of salvation.”* That well that was there that day was used as an object lesson to talk about the Lord Jesus. So He said to this woman, “Woman, if you knew who was asking you, you would ask of Him, and He would give you living water, that you would never thirst again.”

Now, why does the Lord Jesus Christ call Himself *“living water”*? Well, look again—John chapter 4 and verse 10: *“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”* (John 4:10) Again, verse 13: *“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water”—talking about the water in the well—“shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”* (John 4:13–14)

Why is Jesus Christ like water?

A. Jesus Is Satisfying Water

Well, in the first place, Jesus satisfies; and so does water. You see, your body is about seventy percent water. God has made us where we must drink or we die. And therefore a person without water has a thirst, and he has a thirst that only water can satisfy. Now, my dear friend, a person without Jesus has a thirst, and he has a thirst that only Jesus can satisfy. And Jesus is that satisfying water. You listen to me. You will never, never find satisfaction till you find it in Jesus—I don’t care who you are. You were made for the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no satisfaction apart from Him.

People are trying everything today to be satisfied: climbing mountains, racing boats, accumulating wealth, going on trips, having parties, drinking booze.

*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

I have an evangelist friend who got on an airplane one time, was sitting there, and the stewardess came. You know, they serve that liquor. It gives me a pain: they turn every airplane into a bar room. And these girls go up and down the aisles—and young

men—and have to serve it. And she asked my evangelist friend, “Would you like a drink?” Do you know what he said to her? He said, “No thank you, little lady.” He said, “I had a drink about twenty years ago that satisfied me completely.” She said, “You did? It must have been some drink!” He said, “It was.” She said, “What kind was it?” He said, “You serve everybody else and come back, and I’ll tell you about it.” She didn’t know what He was talking about. She served everybody else and came and plopped down in the seat beside Him, buckled the belt, and said, “Tell me about it.” He did.

Oh, listen, friend. There is a drink that satisfies, and that water is satisfying water. You’ll never find satisfaction apart from Jesus. Oh, listen. Some of you listening to me by television right now, your heart is so hungry, and there’s just enough upheaval. You say, “I don’t know what it is; I can’t find the meaning.” Friend, you need Jesus.

B. Jesus Is Sanctifying Water

But not only is He satisfying water; He is sanctifying water. You know, the Bible speaks of *“the washing of water by the word.”* (Ephesians 5:26) The Bible speaks of *“the washing of regeneration”* (Titus 3:5)—because not only was she thirsty on the inside; she was dirty. She needed to be cleansed. And, you see, there is the water of life that cleanses. Jesus, of course, can bathe us and cleanse us and make us clean.

I love that passage over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, if you want to put an annotation in your Bible there in the margin. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 9, Paul says this: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”* Well, it looks bad for her, doesn’t it? But wait a minute. Listen to what else Paul says: *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–11) And when that Samaritan woman received the Lord Jesus Christ as her personal Savior, I want to tell you, though she had been a fallen woman, at that moment she became as pure as a virgin. And every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish Jesus Christ washed away. And the Bible says, *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”* (Isaiah 1:18) And I want to tell you, some of the rest of you here today, if you are haunted by the ghost of guilt, I know some water that can wash away that guilt. Hallelujah!

C. Jesus Is Springing Water

He is satisfying water. He is sanctifying water. And He is springing water. Look at the scripture again. That verse says that the Lord Jesus Christ will be in you *“a well of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4:14)—verse 14. *“Springing up”*: what does that mean? It means that you have the well within you. You see, look, folks: salvation is not

just something where I have to keep coming back to Jesus and keep getting saved over and over again. No. Listen. He gives me the well. The well is in me. The Bible says in John chapter 7—Jesus speaking—*“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”*—*“out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* (John 7:37–38) There is a well right inside of you bubbling up. Remember that chorus we used to sing back in the olden days: “It’s bubbling, it’s bubbling, it’s bubbling in my soul”? I want to tell you right now, this moment, there is a well springing up in me, bubbling up. It is the water of life that the Lord Jesus gives.

This woman left her water pot when she went back into the town. Do you know why she left it? She didn’t need it: she had the well. I mean, there are folks that are going from Bible conference to Bible conference to get their cup filled. I’ll tell you something better than that: just carry the well with you. Always there’s this life of the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn’t mean that you don’t thirst again without satisfaction. Oh, you thirst, and you drink; and you thirst, and you drink; but there never comes a time where Jesus Christ does not satisfy the deepest longing of your heart.

III. A Way to Worship

One last thing, and I’ll be finished—listen: not only a wayward woman; not only a well of water; but a way to worship. Now this is the climax of the whole thing. Why did Jesus forgive her? Why did Jesus seek her? Why did Jesus satisfy her? So that she could worship God. For *“God is a Spirit,”* (John 4:24) and *“the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him,”* (John 4:23) He said.

A. The Why of Worship

Listen to me quickly, and I’ll be finished. Why does God want us to worship Him? Not because God needs it. He’s not some kind of an egomaniac that needs to be bragged on. We need it. Folks, we become like what we worship. Don’t you understand that? When a man makes an idol, first of all, he molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. We become like what we worship. When we worship Jesus, the Bible says this: *“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18) That’s the *why* of worship.

B. The What of Worship

Now, listen. Let’s go on and think for just a moment about what is worship. What is worship? Worship is just simply giving the Lord Jesus Christ the glory and the honor that is due to His name. John MacArthur says this: “Worship is all that we are, responding to all that He is.” I like that. That’s what it is. Do you know the word *worship* comes from two words: *worth-ship*? You see, we worship Him because He’s worth it.

How much is God worth to you? I know. How much is God worth to you? Well, I don't know individually, but I can tell you how you can know: Examine your worship life; and when you examine your worship life, you'll know how much God is worth to you.

Now, dear friend, listen. Worship is all of you responding to all of Him. It is the adoration, the contemplation, of God. You can come to church and not worship. You can read your Bible and not worship. You can pray and not worship. It's not that these things are bad, but you don't have to be in church to worship. You can be in church and not worship. What is worship? It is all of you responding to all of God in adoration and contemplation.

Let me tell you a story. There was a woman in a building, and the building was on fire. It's a true story. She came to the window and she screamed for help. The fire engines came. They put a big ladder up there. A young, handsome fireman went up that ladder, took that beautiful girl in his arms, and brought her down safely. He sat her on the ground. Later on, she thought, "That was a wonderful thing he did for me. I'm going to find him and thank him." She went to the fireman and she thanked him. And after she thanked him, they struck up a conversation. They got to be friends, and they started dating. And after a while, they got married.

Now, let me show you something. When she was up there in that window saying, "Help," that was like prayer. And he answered the prayer: he came and saved her. Then, when she came to see him to thank him, that was like praise. And that was very fine; but the prayer is not quite worship, and the praise is not quite worship. But then, when she fell in love with him and committed all that there was that she knew of her to all that she knew of him, and the two of them became one, their lives are mingled and blended together, that is worship. Thank God for prayer. Thank God for praise. But, oh, my dear friend, worship is all there is of us responding to all that we know of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The *How* of Worship

The *why* of worship: We need to worship. The *what* of worship: I respond in adoration and praise. I blend my life with God. Now, the *how* of worship, and I'm going to be finished. How do you worship? Now, listen. The Bible says, "*The Father seeketh such to worship him.*" (John 4:23) There must be regeneration by the Father. You must be born again. You cannot worship unless God is your Father; and God is not your Father unless Christ is your Savior. Have you been born again? Have you received Christ as your personal Savior? Regeneration by the Father. Activation by the Spirit. Worship in Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God comes into you when you are saved, and He's the One who enables you to worship God. You can't worship God apart from the Holy Spirit, and you can't have the Holy Spirit unless you've been saved. You must worship God in spirit

and in truth. When you are regenerated by the Father, you're activated by the Spirit, and you're saturated with the Word, the truth.

Conclusion

You see, how am I going to worship the Lord? I see these signs on markets; they say, "Worship Sunday in the church of your choice." That sounds good, but who are you: God? You had better worship God in the church of His choice. How are we going to know what's right or what's wrong? We're to worship Him in spirit and in truth. If you worship in spirit without truth, that will make you a fanatic. If you worship in truth and not in spirit, that will make you a Pharisee. But if you worship God in spirit and in truth, that's the proof that you're a Christian. You must be regenerated by the Father. You must be activated by the Spirit. You must be saturated with the Word. That's the way to worship.

Life's Greatest Privilege

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 14, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 4:16–24

Outline

Introduction

I. The “What” of True Worship

II. The “Who” of True Worship

III. The “Why” of True Worship

IV. The Way of True Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

What is worship? Find John chapter 4, and, when you've found it, look up here. And I want to talk to you about worship, literally, life's greatest privilege and life's greatest undiscovered blessing.

Some years ago, Doug Whitt and Silvia, who were newlyweds, were planning their honeymoon night, and they reserved one of the finest rooms in one of the finest hotels. And, when they went to the room, they opened the door, and everything was lovely, but they looked around—there was no bed. And so, they thought, well now, wait a minute. Oh, well, over here is the settee, and they fooled with it, and out came a bed. And so they were expecting maybe a little better bed, but that was the bed that night they slept on, and they both woke up in the morning with a back pain. The mattress was hard and lumpy, and they had paid so much money, the husband, the newlywed, felt maybe he ought to give a little mild protest. So he went down to the desk, and told the desk clerk, “You know, we were expecting something a little better for all the money we paid,” and explained that they had slept on that pullout bed. And the desk clerk said, “Well, didn't you open the other door?” He said, “Other door?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “Oh, no, I thought that was a closet.” And he went up and opened another door, and there was a spacious room with an incredible bed, and flowers, and chocolate, and all of the rest of it.

Now, I think that so many of God's saints have not opened the other door. I mean, they have been saved, and they're heaven-born and heaven-bound, but they have not entered in to this experience of genuine worship.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you that worship is the bottom line of it all.

Worship is the ultimate priority. Worship is the highest good. Worship is the supreme duty. And worship is the maximum privilege.

I'm going to talk to you today about worship, which is life's greatest privilege—life's greatest privilege. Now, worship will free you, and worship will fulfill you, and worship will change life from the monotonous to the momentous. And so, we're going to look at a passage of Scripture today that deals a lot with worship. As a matter of fact, in the short verses that we're going to look at, the Lord Jesus uses the word worship, or its equivalency, ten times, so this is, I would say, the classic passage on worship, which is found here in John chapter 4.

Now, let me give you the background. Jesus is taking a journey, and He doesn't go the easiest way, but He goes through a city called Samaria. The Samaritans did not like the Jews, and the Jews returned the favor. But Jesus, I believe, had a divine appointment that day, so He went through the town, the city, of Samaria, and there He met a woman who had come out at noontime to draw water from a well. Now, this was a shady lady. This was the shady lady of Samaria. She did not have the best reputation. As a matter of fact, she'd been married five times, and was now living with a man that they didn't even have the benefit of a marriage ceremony, just living together. But Jesus looked beyond all of that. Jesus looked into her heart. Jesus looked down deep within her, and He saw someone who was very thirsty, very empty, very disillusioned, someone who was bound by sin, someone blinded by Satan, and someone broken with sorrow, and Jesus began to talk with her about drinking living water. Of course, He was referring to Himself.

Well, this woman was very excited about this living water, but I want to break into the story here because Jesus told her, He said, "Go get your husband and bring your husband." Now, let's begin reading in verse 16: "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. And the woman answered, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that thou saidst truly." Well, this woman, this broken woman, was a thirsty woman. And Jesus had talked to this woman about living water. She wanted something that would satisfy the longing of her soul. She had gone from marriage to marriage, from man to man, had become the dirty plaything of dirtier men, and she's now down deep like everybody we'll meet, if they don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, thirsting.

So this woman, when Jesus told her about her private life, she said—look, if you will, in verse 19—here's what she said: "The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet—I perceive that thou art a prophet—Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Now,

I want you to catch this. Here is a woman with an empty life, a thirsty soul, and she wants to argue religion. You see, for her, religion had proved a washout. It had not satisfied the deepest longing of her heart, and it was for her now something to argue over rather than to rejoice in. Now, what was the argument about? Well, it was the argument about where people ought to worship. Now, the Samaritans worshiped in ignorance, but with zeal. I have been to Samaria. As a matter of fact, there are still some Samaritans left, and they have not changed in 2,000 years. The Samaritans worshiped in ignorance. How do you know that, Pastor? Well, look in verse 22—Jesus said, “Ye worship ye know not what.” Now, they were worshiping, but it was ignorant worship. What they had was zeal with ignorance. What they had was just a blessed ignorance on fire. The Samaritans had rejected all of the Old Testament, except for the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch. And so, Jesus said, “You worship in ignorance.” Now, she was saying, “Well, people ought to worship over here in Samaria where we worship, and the Jews say you ought to worship in Jerusalem.” Now, if the Samaritans worshiped in ignorance with zeal, what about the Jews? The Jews worshiped in orthodoxy and deadness. So, what you had here was zealous ignorance, and dead orthodoxy. And He says here that salvation is of the Jews, in John chapter 4, verse 22. They had the truth, but they had no fire; they had no zeal. And I want to tell you we have those same kinds of people in our world today. We have those who have enthusiastic heresy, and we have those who have lifeless orthodoxy. Some have heat without light; others have light without heat. Some fry in fanaticism; and others freeze in formalism. And they all miss the Lord. They don’t know how to worship. And churches are filled with people today who trudge to church Sunday after Sunday, either with somehow enthusiastic heresy, or dead orthodoxy, and they never, ever worship in spirit or in truth. And, folks, it’ll be a great day when people stop enduring religion and start enjoying true worship.

I want you to think with me about true worship today. And, if you will, look in verse 23: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth...” True worship, the true worshipers—four things.

I. The “What” of True Worship

Number one: The “What” of true worship. What is true worship? The word worship, our English word worship, comes from two words put together, worth and ship. Worship means worth-ship. Come up close; I want to tell you something. You tell me how you worship, and I’ll tell you what God is worth to you. Did that sink in? It is worth-ship. Tell me how you worship, and I will tell you what you think of God. What is worship? Worship is all that I am responding to all that He is. Worship is the adoring

contemplation of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that gives God pleasure. We've learned in our 40 Days of Purpose that we were created to give God pleasure. Remember what I told you the purpose of a pen is? The purpose of a pen is to write.

That pen, I suppose, is worth about \$1.50 or \$2. What's the purpose? To write. Now, if it doesn't write, it's no good, no matter what else it may do. You may like the color, you may like the style, you may like the shape, you may like the feel, but if it doesn't write, it's not fulfilling its purpose. This \$2 pen that writes is better than \$100 that doesn't write.

What is your purpose? No matter what else you do, your purpose is to glorify God and to give God pleasure. This is true worship. And, as we have seen, worship goes beyond coming to church on Sundays, singing hymns, lighting candles or burning incense. The "what" of true worship is giving God pleasure, all that I am responding to all that He is.

II. The "Who" of True Worship

Now, number two: The "Who" of true worship. Who do we worship? Look again in verse 23: "But the hour cometh—Jesus said—and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father." Who do we worship? We worship the Father. Now, it's very important that we worship the right person. The "who" is very, very important, because the greatest sin in the Bible is idolatry. Idolatry is worshiping the wrong thing. Don't get the idea that, so long as you worship, that's all there is to it. The greatest commandment is that we shall love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all of our mind. That is the greatest commandment. To break the greatest commandment has to be the greatest sin.

Now, we have a lot of idols today. People worship a lot of things. They worship money. They worship pleasure. They worship sports figures. They worship movie idols and movie stars. They worship sex and pleasure and hedonism. Don't get the idea that if you don't worship, you don't worship. Everybody worships something. Everybody worships something. Nature abhors a vacuum. If you don't worship God, you will find a substitute to worship. And, when a man ceases to believe in the true God, it's not that he believes in nothing; it means that he'll believe in anything. But you are going to worship. Some worship images. Now, you can find people who build icons and idols and, even in so-called Christian churches, and they'll bow down before them and kiss them—graven images—and they say, "Well, these images, they only remind me of the true God." Suppose, sir, your wife comes in and finds you holding another woman in your arms, embracing her. And you turn, and you see your wife, and you say, "Now, don't get the wrong idea, honey. She's so beautiful, she reminded me of you." Oh, no,

listen. God is not going to let you worship anything or anybody but Himself. And the “who” of true worship is God. There’s no image that you can make like God. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 25: “To whom, then, will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” There’s no one just like God other than God. And the “who” of worship is we’re to worship the Father. He is the Father.

III. The “Why” of True Worship

Now, let’s look, not at the “What,” and the “Who,” but the “Why” of true worship. Why do we worship? I mean, after all, why does God want us to worship Him? Look, if you will again, in verse 23, the last part of that verse: “the Father seeketh such to worship him.” God seeks worship. Now, why does God seek worship? Well, first of all, because of what worship does for us. Worship will do for you what nothing else can do. You were made to worship, and you will become like what you worship. The Bible says those that worship idols become like them. First of all, a man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. And so, most of the idols that men make, if you’ll look in the animistic religions and the other religions of the world where they worship idols, most of the idols are grotesque, and they’re given over to the various passions. The god Bacchus is the god of wine, Aphrodite is the goddess of sex, and so forth, and man just takes his most base passions, makes a god out of them, and then worships his god by participating in that sin. And, after all, “nothing’s too good for a man’s god.” It’s a pretty slick trick of the devil. All an idol is a glorified sinner. Men make idols of their own passions. And so, if they don’t worship the true God, they’re going to go deeper and deeper, reinforcing themselves in their sin. But the same thing is true about true worship. If you worship Almighty God, the more you worship Him, the more you’re going to become like Him—2 Corinthians 3:18: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” As you worship God, you become more and more like Him. And, after all, that’s what we want is to be Godlike in our lives and in our character. You become like what you spend time with, don’t you? Married people—have you ever noticed that married people, after they’re married long enough, begin to look alike? And Joyce is getting worried. I’m telling you, friend, that we become like what we spend time with. And, if you spend time with false gods, you’re going to have a denigrated life. If you spend time in worship, you’re going to become like God.

Why does God want us to worship? Because of what worship does for us. But now, wait a minute. God wants us to worship also because of what worship does for Him. You know, the Bible says, “The Father seeketh such to worship Him.” Did you know that God described Himself in the Bible, and the Lord Jesus Christ describes the Father, as

Father. Father is not merely what God is like. Father is what God is. Father was Jesus' favorite term for the Almighty. He used that term more than seventy times. And I'm so glad that that's what it's all about, that He is the Father who seeketh such to worship Him.

I had a very wonderful father. I wish you could have known my father. My father was a dear and a great man, very strong and very wise, and a very good man. But, when I was a little boy, I stood in absolute awe of my father. My father would go off to work. I would not have the foggiest of what my father did. I can remember now he had a little black valise that he folded up, and my father in those days, when I was a little boy, sold Buick automobiles. And I can remember my dad would go off to work, and he would say to my mother something, "I'm going to see a party." I used to think he gets to go to all these parties. "I'm going to see a party—I'm going to see a party." And he would make these, and sometimes he'd go out in the evening. I would have no idea what he did. But, friend, that did not keep him from being my father, my daddy. I did not understand the automobile business, but I loved him. I loved to sit in his lap. I loved to rub his beard. I loved to play ball with him. He was my dad. And, friend, you don't have to understand how the Father runs the great universe—do you?—how He keeps everything in order. You don't have to understand about His omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience, and all of those things, to know Him as Father. And what does a father want? I can tell you what I want. As a father, and as an industrial-strength grandfather, I tell you what I want—and any of my kids of listening, I want you to—listen—I want some love. I want some love. I want you to say, "Papa, I love you. I appreciate you. Thank you for what you've done. Thank you and Mom for the sacrifices that you've made." That satisfies the longing of a father's heart, does it not? All you dads out there, you know what I'm talking about.

Well, God is a Father—God is a Father. And He wants us to worship, not only for what worship does for us—it makes us like Him; but for what it does for Him—it satisfies the deepest longing of His heart. And many of us say, "What can I give God?" Sometimes at Father's Day, little kids say, "What can I give Pop? He's got everything."

Well, friend, I can tell you one thing you can always give and is always appropriate—L-O-V-E—love.

Now, draw up here and let me tell you something wonderful. There are people who can sing better than you can sing. There are people who can give more than you can give. There are people who can teach better than you can teach. There are people who can serve with more strength than you can serve. But nobody can love God better than you can. Did you hear that? Nobody can love God better than you can. And that, my friend, is what the Father is seeking. The Father seeketh such to worship Him. That is

the “why” of true worship.

IV. The Way of True Worship

Now, I want you to think of the “Way” of true worship. How do we do it? Well, notice again in verses 23 and following: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Now, when the Bible says spirit here, He’s not talking about the Holy Spirit; He’s talking about the human spirit. We’re not to denigrate the Holy Spirit. I’ll say more about that in a moment, but what He’s talking about here is you worship God from the innermost being, from the deepest part of your being, your spirit, and you worship Him with your mind, with your intellect—in spirit and in truth.

Remember the two problems that this woman had—this Samaritan woman? There was the religious but ignorant zeal of the Samaritans. They worshiped in spirit—not the Holy Spirit, just their spirit. I mean, man, they were on fire. But it was ignorant. And then, the Jews, they had the truth—salvation is of the Jews; but they were dead, no spirit. And Jesus is saying, “It’s not either-or. It is both-and. You worship God in spirit and in truth.”

Now, notice, we’re to worship God in spirit. The apostle Paul—put this verse in your margin—Romans 1, verse 9: “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son—I serve with my spirit.” He’s not talking here about the Holy Spirit. Now, I’m not denigrating the Holy Spirit, but here’s the way worship comes. God the Holy Spirit speaks to my human spirit, and my human spirit becomes, then, the instrument of worship by which I praise God. We worship God in spirit down in the deepest part of our being. Now, let me tell you something. If you come to church this morning and you have difficulty worshiping, let me tell you what your problem is: It’s your spirit—it’s your spirit. Maybe you’ve never been born again. Maybe God’s Holy Spirit doesn’t dwell in your spirit, and maybe you’re just wondering what is going on there. Worship to you is boring and dull and deadening, because your spirit is dead. You need to be saved.

Joyce has a brother. He’s now in heaven. His name is Gordon. And Gordon was a playboy. He drove sports cars, and raced boats, and played music, and was just a playboy. And Joyce and I prayed for Gordon, and prayed for Gordon, and prayed for Gordon, that he might get saved. We witnessed to Gordon. He kind of turned us off. He would come hear me preach every now and then just to do me a favor. But then, Gordon got saved. I mean, he got the real thing. Gordon found Jesus. And he came to hear me preach one time, and he said, “Adrian! What has happened to you?” He said,

“You preach so much better than you used to preach.” I said, “Gordon, you just have a new set of ears.” That’s all there is. I mean, here was Gordon. He found Jesus, and worship became real to him.

You worship in spirit. But now, listen. You also worship in truth. This is very important to our day that puts so much emphasis on emotionalism. Now, I’m not opposed to emotionalism, as long as it is bound to truth. Worship is a response built on truth. Put this verse down—it’s a key verse—Psalm 147 and verse 18: “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.”

Now, your worship will never rise above your knowledge of God. That’s why we must always expound the Scripture. That’s why the center part of our church is not the preacher, but the pulpit and the Word of God. That’s what makes Bellevue the church that it is. Now, there are some people that just want to pray and sing and praise and fellowship. That’s all good, but it is worthless, if it is not based in truth. Real worship is emotional and subjective, and it is also intellectual and objective. Now, listen to it in Colossians 3, verse 16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you...—the Bible, the Word of Christ—dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” There it is: spirit and truth. Let the word of Christ dwell in you. And then, sing in songs and hymns and spiritual songs.

Some of the modern praise choruses are wonderful, and some of them are pure syrup. There’s no truth in them, and they’re just all sentiment. Now, friend, we need both: spirit and truth. And, if you worship with your spirit without truth, you’ll blow up. If you worship in truth without spirit, you’ll dry up. If you worship in spirit and truth, you’ll grow up. You’ll be strong in the Lord. The Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

Well, I had some more material there, but I’m going to skip on down and come actually to a great verse that seems to sum it up. I want you to put this verse in your margin—Mark 12, verse 30. Jesus said this is the great commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment.” Now, how do we love Him, and how do we worship Him? Well, we’re to love Him passionately, with all of our heart.

Brothers and sisters, half-hearted worship is an insult to Almighty God. Not only are we to love Him passionately; we’re to love Him selflessly, with all of our soul—with all of our soul. The soul is the self, and all of the soul has to be given over to the Lord. Focus on Him—focus on Him.

Joyce and I were reading this morning in the book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*. And he said, if you come to church, and you go away, and say something like this: “I didn’t get

anything out of it,” you missed the whole point. It’s not about you; it’s about Him—it’s about Him. It’s not what you got out of it. What does God get out of it? Friend, did you give God glory, or did you come and just sit there, and say, “Bless me if you can, Pastor”? No, we’re to love Him passionately. We’re to love Him selflessly. We’re to love Him thoughtfully, with all of your mind.

Did you check your brains at the door when you came in today, or is your mind centered on Him? “Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.” And then, we’re to love Him practically, with all of our strength.

Now, some people get the idea that, if we’re to worship God correctly, we’re going to have a 9-hour quiet time, or we’re going around all day long chanting Gregorian chants or something. No. Listen. What is worship? Worship is doing everything you do for the glory of God, and giving Him praise.

You have to go to work tomorrow morning. Well, when you go to work, you can make your work a temple of devotion and a lampstand for a witness. You say, “Is that really, really true?” Listen to this verse—Colossians 3, verses 16 and 17: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord—now, listen to this—and whatsoever ye do...—listen—whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Whatever it is! You can mop a floor for the glory of God. Whatever you do. Again, another verse very similar to that—1 Corinthians 10, verse 31: “Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God.”

Let me tell you something. I believe in coming to church for worship. The Bible commands it. I believe in getting in your closet and getting on your knees with God. I believe that. The Bible commands it. But I also believe that when you go to work tomorrow, everything you do ought to be an act of worship. You say, “Well, now, wait a minute, Pastor. You don’t know the devil I work for, that two-legged rascal.” Well, let me tell you how to change that. Just change bosses—just change bosses—and go to work tomorrow for Jesus. Whatever you do, do it as unto Him. And that boss may be standing on the sideline, but you do it as unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and do the best job you can do, and you can say, “Lord, what I’m doing tomorrow in my job is an act of worship, because whatever I do, in word or deed, whether I eat or whether I drink, or whatever I do, I do all to the glory of God.”

There was a great violinist. His name was Fritz Chrysler. He was a master violinist. He had his eye on a violin, a Stradivarius, that was owned by a very wealthy Britisher who lived in London. Fritz Chrysler tried to buy that Stradivarius violin, but the wealthy man would not part with it. One day, Fritz Chrysler went to call on him, and said,

“Please, sir, can I just come in and touch it.” The old man said, “Come in.” Fritz Chrysler picked up that violin, tucked it under his chin, and began to play. And when he did, you could hear children laughing, you could hear birds singing, you could hear the angels praising, and the old Britisher sat there with the tears coming down his cheeks. Chrysler looked up and said, “I’m sorry. I just wanted to play it. I just wanted to touch it. Would you please sell it to me?” The old man said, “No, I will not sell it to you, but it is yours to keep. It belongs to you. You are the master. No one else is worthy of it.”

Conclusion

Friend, I want to tell you something. You belong to Jesus and no one else is worthy of the praise that you ought to be giving to Almighty God. No one else is worthy of your life. No one else is worth it. Remember again that worship is worth-ship.

Well, you say, “Well, I’m so glad that wicked old woman got saved there, that Samaritan woman.” Friend, that’s John chapter 4. In John chapter 3, Nicodemus, a religious man, got saved. Remember again there’s no one so good they need not be saved, and no one so bad they can’t be saved. And you’ll never know true worship until you worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Bow your heads in prayer.

And, if you’re not saved, today, I want to lead you in a prayer where you can invite Christ into your heart. Would you pray a prayer like this: O God, I need You, and I want You. Jesus, You shed Your blood on the cross to save me. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for dying for me. Thank You for all that You’ve done. Now, Lord Jesus, I want to be saved. I turn from my sin. I turn to You. I come like a little child. I lay my pride in the dust. I confess my inability to do anything for myself apart from You. And, by faith I receive You into my life. Take control of my life today, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. And I give my life to You. And may my life be a praise and a glory to You. May my life give You pleasure. Thank You, Jesus, thank You. Give me the courage now to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, or you need a little help praying that prayer, we’re going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front. At the head of every one of these aisles will be a minister to welcome those of you who’ll be coming forward. For those dear friends who are in the balcony who’ve been making a decision, there’ll be someone standing under that banner that says Redeemer to my right, and the one that says Messiah to my left. Respectfully, I’m going to ask now there be no moving around, no leaving the auditorium, unless it is an emergency. Be in a spirit of prayer. And, if you prayed that prayer, said, Lord Jesus, take control of my life, forgive

my sin, and save me, and you trust Him to do it, you leave your seat and come forward. There's something about an open, public acknowledgement of Christ that settles it and seals it. And, if you need some more help, you still come. We've got an open Bible. Well, "Pastor, what will I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus," or, "I want to trust Him. I need some more help." Just put it in your own words. Don't worry about how you say it. He'll understand why you've come. Now, others of you here today, you're truly saved, and you've been saved; you know that you're saved. Maybe your membership is elsewhere, but you worship here, and you need a church home here. May I invite you to come today down any of these aisles, or even lead the way for these others who are coming to acknowledging Christ as their Lord and Savior. You come and say, "I want to place my membership here," and we'll guide you in that decision. Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." How wonderful that will be. Others are saying, "I want to place my membership here." No one will leave, please, unless it is an emergency.

Father God, I just pray now that You'll give us a wonderful harvest, and help people to be obedient. In Jesus' dear name. Amen.

Let's stand as we sing. You step out and come. Right now step out and come.

Life's Greatest Privilege

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 14, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 4:16–24

Outline

Introduction

I. The “What” of True Worship

II. The “Who” of True Worship

III. The “Why” of True Worship

IV. The Way of True Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn please to John chapter 4, a very familiar passage of Scripture.

I want to tell you an interesting story about a young couple, Doug Whitt, and his bride, Silvia. They had arranged for their honeymoon night, and they wanted it to be perfect, so they found a great hotel, found a very classic, quite expensive room, reserved it for their wedding night. When they opened the door, the room was beautiful, except there was an exception. They didn't see a bed in there. They looked. There was a couch. And so they fooled with the couch, and it was a bed folded there. They really expected more, but the rest of the room was beautiful. And so, they spent the night, woke up the next day with a back pain, a hard, lumpy mattress never quite right—you know how they are when they fold into those couches. And they got to talking about it. And Doug said, “I hate to complain, but I expected more. I thought we deserved more for what we paid.” So he mentioned it to the desk clerk. The clerk said, “Well, didn't you open the other door?” He said, “What door?” He said, “The door.” He said, “I thought that was a closet.” He went up there and opened the door, and here's this gorgeous, spacious room with this incredible big bed, chocolates, and flowers, and everything. And they just failed to open the door.

Now, you know, a lot of people are that way when they get saved. All they know is, thank God, I'm no longer going to hell; thank God, I am saved, my sin is forgiven; I'm heaven-born, I'm heaven-bound. Friend, there's another door that needs to be opened. There is more, and so many never find it, and that is the door of worship that will change your life from the monotonous to the momentous. It is life's greatest privilege. It is life's highest duty. It is life's best good. It is the maximum privilege that we have. It is

the bottom line. Now, you may not have heard that, or you may think that's rhetoric, but listen to me again. It is the highest good. It is the greatest duty. It is the maximum privilege. It is the bottom line of everything. You were saved to worship God. That's what it's all about. I mean, why did He create us to begin with? To give Him pleasure. And how we do that is when we worship Him. Anything that doesn't do what it was made to do, as I've told you before, is a failure. The pen is made to write. A pen that doesn't write, no matter what else it may look like, no matter how valuable it may seem, if it doesn't write, it is a failure. A \$1.50 Flair pen that writes is better than a \$100 Schaeffer that doesn't, as far as purpose is concerned. Now, no matter what else you may do, if you don't worship the Lord, you are a failure—a failure. Why? Because you're not doing what you were made to do.

Now, the passage that we're going to study today from John chapter 4 is a classic passage on worship. As a matter of fact, the word worship is used in some form at least ten times in these verses. Now, I don't have time to read all of the verses this morning, but we will take some selected verses.

But let me just give you the background of the story. Jesus is on a journey. He chooses to go through a city called Samaria, and it was hostile territory. The Samaritans did not like the Jews. Jesus is a Jew. The Jews returned the favor and did not like the Samaritans. Of course, Jesus was different. He had a divine appointment. And there at a well, at noontime, He met a woman who'd come out to draw water. This woman was not a good character. She was a shady lady of Samaria. She'd been married five times, and now she's living with a man without the benefit of marriage. Now, of course, today she'd win an Academy Award, but that's different. Regardless, she was not a good woman. But she was a thirsty woman, and she had a broken heart. She was bound by sin. She was blinded by Satan. She was broken by sorrow, disillusioned, thirsty. She'd gone from husband to husband, from affair to affair. She had become the dirty plaything of dirtier men. Now, she's sort of a burned-out cinder with a dry, shriveled-up soul. And she met Jesus there by the well.

So Jesus uses, as the master teacher, whatever is at hand to teach a great lesson. And this time it was water. And Jesus began to talk to her about the water of life, and a drink that satisfies, water that springs up into everlasting life, water that, if you drink it, you will never thirst again. Of course, He was talking about Himself, the water of life. And this woman said, "Oh, sir, I want that water. Give me that water." Now, let's break into the story here a little bit.

Take your Bibles now, and look down, if you will, and look in John chapter 4. Let's begin in verse 16. Jesus says something to her to help her to understand her deep need, greater than she had yet understood it, and He said this with a purpose in verse

16. He said, “Go get your husband.” Look at it. “Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.” Now, you can imagine how she felt. I mean, she’s living with a man she’s not even married to. “Hey, go get your husband and come over here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that thou saidst truly.” This woman is amazed. She is dumbfounded. How did He know all of that? I mean, He’s just a stranger just passing through, and here He’s giving me my biography. And look, if you will, in verse 19: “And the woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” Now, you would think at this point that she would want to learn more about that living water, but she wants to get into a theological and religious argument. And here’s what she said: “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain...”—that’s the mountain that was right near that place of Samaria. I’ve been there many times, and the Samaritans had a synagogue there, and she said, “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say in Jerusalem is the place where we ought to worship.” Now, what she’s trying to say is, “Now, which is the proper place, Samaria or Jerusalem? This mountain or Mt. Zion?” Now, the point of the whole matter is this: that religion for her was a basis of argument, not a place of blessing. Religion had become a washout to this woman. She tried religion, but it’s obvious that religion had not done her any good. And may I tell you something? Religion hasn’t done anybody any good. That may surprise you, coming from a pulpit. Christianity is not a religion; it is a vital relationship with God through Christ. It’ll be a great day in America when people stop enduring religion and start enjoying salvation. Here this woman wanted to have an argument. Now, here was the argument—the difference between Samaria and Jerusalem.

Now, let me tell you about the Samaritans. The Samaritans were very superstitious. As a matter of fact, they had rejected all of the Old Testament, all of it, and that was the Bible that was extant in that day. They’d rejected all of it, except for five books, the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They still, to this day—I have been to Samaria. I have gone up there on the mountain and seen some Samaritans—they still have an old ancient Pentateuch, a scroll of the first five books of the Bible. Now, they were in abject ignorance, but they worshiped with fiery zeal.

Now, what about the Jews? Well, the Jews were not ignorant. They had the law.

They had the Word of God, but they had no zeal. Now, notice how Jesus described it, in John chapter 4, verse 22: “You—the Samaritans—worship you know not what.” It was ignorant worship. “We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” Now, but what was wrong with the Jews? The Jews had dead orthodoxy. Jesus said, “Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites; as it is written, this people honoreth me with

their lips, but their heart is far from me.” So here are the only two things this woman had seen: religious fanaticism, zeal and ignorance; or else orthodoxy dead as a wedge, and dry as old King Tut. Now, that’s the choice that many people have today; I mean, in the world today that’s just about your two options, if you leave true worship out of it. There are people who either want to fry in fanaticism or freeze in formalism. Either they have heat with no light, or they have light with no heat. That’s what the argument was about in this day, and they missed the point of true worship, worshiping God in spirit and in truth.

I. The “What” of True Worship

Now, let’s notice some things about true worship. Are you ready? Nod your head. Okay, first of all, listen. Let’s think about the “What”—W-H-A-T—of true worship. Notice what Jesus said now in verse 23: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers...”—underscore that “the true worshipers.” Not all worship is true worship—“the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

Now, what is worship? What is worship? It’s an expression of belief. That’s what I think worship is.

You manifest your belief in worshiping your God, or your deities—that’s the way I call it—anytime you give a lot of thought to something, really.

Worship is, basically, under whatever circumstances you are, kind of giving the due credit to God that He deserves, for giving us all the blessings that we have.

I see it as idolizing anything, whether it be God or something else.

All in the praises of God, and rejoicing in His splendor.

Worship is when you come together with a group of people in praise, and give the praises to the Lord.

Well, I guess you could demonstrate that just by living correctly and holding true to your beliefs, and worship proper. I guess it would be the formal assembly.

I know what a lot of people think worship is, which is singing praises to God, but I feel like worship is a lifestyle. Worship is more than just going to church on Sunday. Worship is letting Jesus Christ control every aspect of your life, and spending time with Him, and doing what you know will please the Lord.

People have a lot of ideas about worship, don’t they? Let me tell you what I think worship is. Worship is all that I am responding to all that He is, in gratitude and praise—all that I am responding to all that He, is in gratitude and praise. It is a church service, yes. It is music, yes. It is prayer, yes. But it goes beyond that. All that I am responding to all that He is. And, brothers and sisters, it includes all of life.

II. The “Who” of True Worship

Now, let’s move from the “What,” and let’s think a little bit about the “Who” of worship. Who do we worship? Well, look again in verse 23: “But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father”—worship the Father. Not a father, or not something, but the Father. Now, Father is not what God is like; Father is what God is. It was Jesus’ favorite term for the Almighty. Jesus called Him Father over 70 times in the Bible. Now, man is incurably religious. All anthropologists will tell you this. People everywhere worship. And, if you don’t worship the Father, it’s not that you will not worship; you’ll worship something else. When a man ceases to believe in the true God, it’s not that he believes in nothing; it is that he will believe in anything. Nature abhors a vacuum; therefore, all people are incurably religious. Many of them want to worship idols, sticks, and stones, and we still see that in various places of the world. If you travel to India and other places, your heart will be broken with the sheer idolatry. But, even in American religion, you have people who will set up images in their churches, figures of saints or whatever, and they bow down before them, and light candles to them, and say prayers to them. And you say, “You shouldn’t do that.” “Oh,” they say, “now, look, we’re really worshipping God. This is a means to help us to worship God. We’re thinking about God the Father when we do this.” Well, suppose, sir, you have another woman in your arms who’s not your wife, and you are embracing a woman, and your wife comes in, and you say, “Now, sweetheart, it’s not what you think. She is so beautiful she reminds me of you.” I don’t think many women will buy that. And, friend, I’m telling you there is no image that substitutes for Almighty God. You are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We worship the Father. He is the Father.

III. The “Why” of True Worship

Now, let’s move to the third thing. Why do we worship? Why do we worship? Look again in John chapter 4, verse 23, the last part: “the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Now, why does God seek worshipers? Well, first of all, God seeks worshipers for what worship does for us. We become like what we worship. That’s the reason that idolatry is so hideous. Do you know what an idol is? An idol is a magnified sinner. Look at the carved idols that the pagans worship. They’re grotesque. They are ferocious. They are cruel, or they’re indolent, or lazy. It can be a fat Buddha, or it could be a pot-bellied god, the god of Bacchus, which is the god of wine or drink, where we get the word a bacchanalian orgy. It could be Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of sex. What man does, ancient man, he takes his worse vices and worships them. It’s a pretty neat trick. If you make, if you make a god out of sex, then you worship your god by illicit sex. If you make a god out of alcohol, then you worship your god through alcohol. The

pagans did that; they went deeper and deeper into sin and degradation because they had taken their vices, made gods out of them, and then magnified that god, and going deeper and deeper into sin. Well, you say, “We don’t have those kind of images today.” Well, anything that a man loves more, fears more, serves more, honor more than Jehovah is an idol. We have idols of sports, and pleasure, and money, and sex, and hedonism, and pleasure. And the more you participate in these things, the more you become like them. But the same is true of true worship. The more you worship God, the more Godlike you become. Paul says, “We’re changed as we behold his face into the same image from glory into glory.” And you’ve seen a person who’s walked with the Lord for a long time, you will see Jesus Christ in that person. Anytime you spend time with people for a long time, you become like them. As a matter of fact, have you ever seen husbands and wives who have been married for a long time begin to look alike? Do you ever notice that? I can tell you, Joyce is getting worried. We become like what we worship, and who we spend time with. God wants us to worship for what worship will do for us.

I’ll tell you another reason God wants us to worship: for what worship does for God. You say, “Can I do anything for God?” Yes, you can. You can give God pleasure. What is the nature of God? I refer back to it again. “The Father seeketh such to worship him—the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Now, think of God as a Father. That’s the way God wants us to think of Him.

You know, I loved my dad so much. I respected and honored my dad. My dad was a great man—he really was—and great in my eyes. I don’t mean that he ever got honors, or awards, or anything like that—in many ways, a very nondescript man. But my dad, when I was a little boy, sold automobiles. He sold Buick automobiles for East Coast Motors there in West Palm Beach, Florida. And my dad would go off to work. I was a little guy, hadn’t even started school yet. But I remember my dad had a black valise, or something that he folded over. It was made of leather. He carried it with him. He had a big rubber band that went around it. He kept his papers, his prospects and things, in there, for automobiles. Often, my dad, when he’d go off to work, he’d say to my mother, “I’m going to see a party today.” I used to think, he gets to go to so many parties. “I’m going to see a party today about this.” A party—that was one of his terms that he used. But really I didn’t have any notion about what my father did, but when he came home, he was my dad. I loved him. I did not know him as a salesman, or as a manager, which he was, but I knew him as my father. Now, folks, look. You don’t have to have a Ph.D. to understand all about the omniscience of God, and the omnipresence of God, and the omnipotence of God, and all of the various qualities of God. If you know those things, and learn them, wonderful, and you should study to find these things out, but friend, you

can know God as Father. You don't have to understand. A little boy, 4 or 5 years old, didn't have to understand his dad to know his dad and love his dad. And what does a father want? Well, look up here and take it from me. I'll tell you what a father wants. I am a father, and I am an industrial-strength grandfather, and I'll tell you what a father wants. And any of my kids out here listening, or who get this tape later on, listen up. Love—love. That's what I want. I want my children to love me, and respect me, and honor me, and say, "Thank you for what you've done. Thank you for your sacrifice." I want love.

Now, you know, when Father's Day comes, or I just had a birthday, they always say, "What are we going to get Papa?" You know, and they worry about it. "What does he need? What does he want?" Well, the trinkets don't really matter. What he wants is love. What he wants is love.

Now, I'm going to give you some good news. Here's the good news. There are others who might offer to God more expensive presents. There are others who can sing better, or preach better. There are others who are freer to travel. There are others who have more intellectual firepower between their ears. There are others who are artistically gifted, who can do this and do that, and thank God for them. But no one has cornered the market on love. Listen, my child. There is no one who can love God better than you can—isn't that great? Did you hear that? There is no one who can love God better than you can, and that, above all things, pleases Him. What is the great commandment? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. This is the first and great commandment." Now, that's why we worship Him.

Did you know that the word worship is actually a combination of words that means worth-ship? Worth-ship. You show me how you worship, and I'll tell you what God is worth to you. It's that simple. You show me how you worship, and I'll tell you what God is worth to you. Our worship is our worth-ship, now, His worth-ship.

IV. The Way of True Worship

Number four: Let's think a little bit about the "Way" of true worship. Now, not all worship is accepted. The worship of the Samaritans, and their ignorant zeal, that wasn't accepted. The worship of the Jews, and their dead orthodoxy, that wasn't accepted. What is the way of true worship? Well, look, if you will, in verses 23 and 24. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers...—again, underscore that—the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." God is a spirit. Literally, in the Greek language, God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Now, remember

the dichotomy, the contest there between the Samaritans and the Jews. One had ignorant zeal, and the other had dead orthodoxy. And what our Lord is saying is not either-or; it is both-and. You need the zeal, and you need the truth. When the Bible says we're to worship God in spirit—now, listen to me carefully—He's not talking about the Holy Spirit. He's talking about the human spirit. Now, we're not opposed to the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, you can't worship apart from the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit of God works in your human spirit. You see, the innermost part of your nature is spirit. "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." You have spirit. You are a spirit. That's what makes you different from animals. You're a spirit being. And that speaks of your innermost being, your spirit. That's what worships. The reason that people can come to church like this on Sunday morning, and be bored, or be confused, or be turned off, is basically a spiritual problem—basically a spiritual problem. If your spirit is dead, or your spirit is warped, you can't worship, because worship has to come from your innermost being. It has to come from your spirit.

My precious wife is up here in the choir, has a brother. He's now in heaven. His name is Gordon. Gordon was sort of a playboy, debonair type of young man, young business man, handsome, strong, intelligent, gifted, but he raced boats, drove sports cars, and just lived that style of life. Joyce and I prayed for him, and witnessed to him, and prayed for him, but he just sort of blew it off. But precious Joyce kept praying for Gordon, and witnessing to Gordon, and one day Gordon got saved. I mean, he got a double dose. He got the full load. He got saved. He'd come to hear me preach before out of just kindness. After he got saved, he came to hear me preach. He said, "Adrian! What happened to you?" He said, "Man," he said, "your preaching has changed." I said, "Gordon, I'm preaching the same thing I was preaching before. I haven't changed; you've changed. God's given you a new heart. God's given you a new spirit. God's given you new ears to hear."

People have ears, and they don't hear; eyes, and they don't see. They have dead spirits. You worship in spirit, and, in order to do that, you've got to be saved. But you also worship in truth. It's not just enough to sing praise choruses. It's not just enough to pray. It's not just enough to cry. There must be an intelligent worship. Listen to this psalm—Psalm 145 and verse 18: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." Your worship will never rise higher than your knowledge of God. That's why, folks, we must continually expound the Word of God. That's why we have this pulpit. That's why this church has been built solidly upon the Word of God. There is the subjective worship in spirit, there is the objective worship in truth, and both go together. Listen to a great verse that puts them together—Colossians 3:16: "Let the

word of Christ dwell in you...—that’s the truth—let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Do you see the balance? Songs, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord; but the Word of God dwelling in you. Worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Listen. If you worship only in spirit, you’ll blow up. If you worship only in truth, you’ll dry up. If you worship in spirit and in truth, you’ll grow up. You’ll be what you ought to be. There has to be the Holy Spirit and the human spirit combined with the truth of God’s Word. And that is the “How,” the “Way” of true worship. Here’s what our Lord said again, in Mark 12, verse 30: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart—that’s passionate worship—with all thy soul—that’s selfless worship—with all thy mind—that’s intelligent worship—and with all thy strength”—that’s practical worship. That is, whatever we do, it has to include the totality of the human being.

Conclusion

Now, so many of us are so self-centered. Have you ever heard a person say, “Well, I went to church, but I didn’t get anything out of it?” Are you listening? It’s not about you. The question is, did God get anything out of it? Did you praise Him? Did you give Him glory? What if somebody came to my birthday party the other day, and said, “Well, I didn’t get anything out of it”? It’s not about you. It’s about Him. We have come to worship Him and to glorify Him. And, again, friend, no matter what you do, if you’re a pencil that doesn’t write, or a car that doesn’t transport, you are a failure. We’re to worship God in spirit and in truth. Well, hallelujah for that.

Some of you say, “Well, I’m glad that old wicked old shady lady of Samaria got saved. She sure needed to be saved.” Well, so do you. You see, look. In the 4th chapter of John, this woman from Samaria who gets saved, and she needed to be. In the 3rd chapter of John, there was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, a religious leader. He got saved. What’s the lesson? There is no one so good they need not be saved, and no one so bad they can’t be saved. That’s the lesson. You see, Nicodemus was thirsty, and this woman was thirsty, and whoever you are, if you’re thirsty, I’m telling you, who you’re thirsting for is the Lord Jesus Christ, the living water, and I’m going to tell you today, that He will save you, and He’ll keep you saved.

There was a violinist. He was a concert artist. His name was Fritz Chrysler. Musicians will tell you one of the greatest violinists who ever lived. He wanted a Stradivarius violin that belonged to an old Britisher who lived in London. The man was immensely wealthy. He didn’t need money. The violin was one of his treasures. Fritz Chrysler tried to buy it, but it was not for sale. One day, Fritz Chrysler went to the man’s

house, and knocked on the door, and said, "Please, sir, can I just see the violin and touch it?" The old man was gracious. He said, "Come in." Fritz Chrysler picked up that Stradivarius violin, caressed it with his fingers, tucked it under his chin, and began to draw the bow across the strings. You could hear the angels singing. You could hear the laughter of children in the streets. You could hear the birds in the trees. You could hear the water rippling through the brook. You could hear the wind in the leaves. The old Britisher sat there, and the tears just coming down his cheeks. Chrysler played for about 20 minutes, and he said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you. Please sell it to me." The old man said, "It is not for sale, but it is yours. You shall have it, because you are the master, and it belongs to you, and no one else is worthy of it."

Friend, your life belongs to Jesus Christ, and no one else is worthy of it, no one. He is the master, and only in His hands can you ever be what you were created to be.

Would you bow your heads in prayer.

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you know that you know Jesus, would you begin to pray for precious friends around you who may not know Him. And, if you're not certain that you're saved, let me guide you in a prayer. And, in this prayer, you may receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Now, repeating words doesn't save. You must mean what you say. So carefully pray. Forget anyone else is here, just you and the Lord, and pray this prayer: Dear God, Thank You for loving me. Thank You for being willing to save me. Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You shed Your blood on the cross to pay my sin debt. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, by faith, I receive You into my life; this very moment, right here in this seat, right now, today, this moment, I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior. I turn from my sin. I turn from the old way. I turn to You. Now, I'm weak, and You'll have to help me, and I'll need to grow, but, Lord, I'm trusting You. Begin now to make me what You want me to be. I'm giving my life to You, and I'm trusting You to save me. Thank You that You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You that my sin is buried in the grave of Your forgetfulness. Thank You, Lord. Save me, Jesus. Pray that: save me, Jesus; save me, Jesus. Ask Him. Did you ask Him? Then, by an act of sheer faith, say thank You for doing it. That settles it. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You're now my Lord and my Savior, and my God and my Friend. And, Lord Jesus, I will make this public, if You will only help me. I will not be ashamed of You. Pray that: I'll not be ashamed of You. In Your name. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer today, and were sincere, you have every reason to believe that Jesus did just what you asked Him to do, for the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Every sin is forgiven, Christ is in your heart, heaven is your home, if you're sincere. "Pastor, how

can I know if I'm sincere?" May I ask you this question? Are you willing to make it public? Are you? Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you." Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father, which is in heaven." The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." So, if you prayed that prayer and meant it, here's what we're going to do. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front, for those of you down here who'll be coming forward. For those of you in the balcony who'll be making public acknowledgments of Christ, there will be somebody standing under that banner there in the corner that says Redeemer, or this one over here that says Messiah, to welcome those on this side. We're going to sing, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now." And, when we do that, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. "Well, Pastor, I've never done that before. What do you say when you go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus," or, "I need some more help." "Well, what will happen?" Number one: we'll rejoice that you've come. Number two: We'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Number three: We'll seal it with you in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. It'll be one of the greatest things you've ever done. If I could do it for you, I would, but I can't. These people are all praying that that's what you'll do. I'm trusting Jesus. Perhaps there are others of you here today, you're saved and you know that you're saved. You've gotten all this settled, but your church membership is elsewhere, or you need a church home, for whatever reason. I want you to come forward at the same time, the same time these others are coming. As a matter of fact, see if you can be the first one down here. And I want you to say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here," and he'll tell you how you may become a member. Now, I'm talking to those of you who are already saved and already know Christ. You need a church home. There's a warm welcome for you, if you want to be a growing Christian. We don't ask that you be perfect. No one here is perfect. We ask you be sincere. And God's plan is for every child of God to be a member of a local New Testament church, if not Bellevue, one somewhere that preaches the Bible. You're welcome here. I'm trusting those of you, if this is where God speaks to your heart and meets you, that you be the first ones down here. Others who prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart, don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You come, if everyone else does; you come, if no one else does.

Let's bow one more time in prayer. Father God, bless this time of invitation. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Stand together. You step out and come right now. Come on!

A Worshipping Church

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 30, 2005

Main Scripture Text: John 4:23–24

Outline

Introduction

I. The Meaning of True Worship

II. The Motive of True Worship

III. The Method of True Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

What a mighty name, the name of Jesus. Take your Bible, find John chapter 4, and look up here. In these climatic days in which we're living in the life of our church, I have been trying to distill and focus on the things that I have told you for 32 years. What kind of a church should our church be? What is the church of my dreams? What is the church of my aspirations? What is the church that I hope will be the future church?

I spoke to you one Sunday on a unified church. And then I spoke to you on a steadfast church. And then I spoke to you on a miracle church. And then, last Sunday, on a praying church. Today, a worshipping church.

Take God's Word, John chapter 4, and look, if you will, in verse 23. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Now, we're going to revisit this morning a passage of Scripture that I've shared with you down through the years over and over again. It is a pivotal passage and it is a basic passage on worship.

I ask you a question. What is life's highest good? Is it service? That's wonderful. Is it sacrifice? Indeed, that is glorious. But, church, you listen to me. The bottom line—are you listening?—of all of life, life's ultimate priority, life's highest good, life's supreme duty, life's greatest privilege, is worship. Now, you know what? That was a good place for an amen. I want that to be riveted into your heart. I'm not just talking to you rhetoric; I'm talking about to you something that is transformation, something that will change your Christian life from the monotonous to the momentous. I'm talking to you about something that will free you, and something that will fulfill you, something that will glorify God through you, something that will give you great joy.

Now, I say this is a classic passage on worship, and I've mentioned it to you down through the years many times, but today I want to drive the nail in, turn it over, and bend it back. I want you to learn as a church, over and over again, to worship. The only way we can learn as a church to worship is to learn as individuals.

Now, this is a marvelous chapter, this fourth chapter of John. Jesus is on a journey, and the Bible says, "He must needs go through Samaria." Now, that was not the easiest way. That was the mountainous way. If He'd wanted to take the easiest way, He would have gone down alongside the River Jordan, and I've made both trips many times. But Jesus must needs go through Samaria.

Now, the Samaritans were left over from the exile, and they intermarried, and the Jews thought of them as a mongrel race, and looked down upon them. And the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were hostile to the Jews, and vice versa.

But now, Jesus is going through Samaria, and in the middle of the day He's hot, tired, worn. He's sitting on the curbing of a well. It's called the well of Jacob, or Jacob's well. It's a deep well. I've drunk water out of that well. It goes way down deep. You can take some water and pour it and wait a long time before you hear it splash in the bottom. Now, that well is still there today. And Jesus was sitting on the curbing, the parapet around that well. The disciples had gone into the city to get some food because it was lunchtime and they were hungry. And there was not a McDonald's in sight, and so they'd gone into the city to buy food. And this woman comes out there.

Now, this woman was what we would call a shady lady. She's the shady lady of Samaria. She has been married 5 times. Today, we'd give her an academy award. She'd been married five times, and now she's living with a man without even the benefit of a marriage ceremony. And she comes out there, not when the other women came out to draw water because they would look down upon her, maybe spit on her, so she comes out there by herself to draw water. And Jesus is there, and Jesus says to her, "Would you give me a drink of water?" She said, "How is it that you, being a Jew, would speak to me, a Samaritan, and ask of me of water?" He said, "Well, if you knew who was talking to you, you'd ask him and he'd give you living water." She said, "What do you mean living water? You don't have anything to draw with. The well is deep." And Jesus now begins to speak to this thirsty woman about real living water, a drink that would satisfy her forever and ever and ever and ever, because Jesus Christ is what every soul thirsts for: He's the water of life!

Look at this poor woman. There she was bound by sin. She'd gone from husband to husband and to husband, and she got deeper and deeper into sin. The cords of sin had bound her. Not only was she bound by sin, but she was blinded by Satan. She didn't

know the way out. She had religion, but religion was a washout to her. It did not satisfy her hungry, thirsty soul. Bound by sin, blinded by Satan, and broken by sorrow—think of this woman! Think how pitiful her life was. Jesus’ heart went out to her in compassion, as He goes out to you in compassion. And this woman needed to lift her eyes from the things of this earth and learn how to worship. And so, Jesus teaches her now about worship, and Jesus said, “God is spirit.” Not a spirit. The Bible, the King James, says “a spirit,” but maybe better translated, “God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Three things I want you to learn about worship today. May God the Holy Spirit impress them upon your soul, or rivet them into your consciousness, and cause you to remember them forever and ever.

I. The Meaning of True Worship

First of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call the meaning of true worship—the meaning of true worship. Now, this woman knew about worship, but she didn’t understand true worship. Look, if you will, in verses 19 and 20: “The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Now, what she wants to do is to get up a discussion about worship. She didn’t know anything about real worship, but she knew about religion. As I said, religion had been a washout to her. And now, what she wants to do right now is to argue about religion, to argue about worship. “You Jews say that Jerusalem is the place to worship. We say here in Samaria our mountain is the place to worship. Now, if you’re a prophet, you tell me which is the right place to worship.” Now, I want you to see the tension that was here.

You remember, obviously, the Jews and the Samaritans are not getting along. Now, the Samaritans worshiped in ignorance and zeal. Now, notice what Jesus said. Look down in verse 22: “Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” The Samaritans worshiped in ignorance, but they worshiped in zeal. As a matter of fact, I have been to Samaria. There’s still a group of Samaritans to this day who have the five books of Moses and an ancient scroll. I’ve seen it. The Samaritans had rejected all of the Bible, all of the Old Testament, except for the five books of Moses. And they were so certain that they knew the truth. They were so certain that their worship was the right worship and nobody else’s worship was the right worship. So what they had was zeal and ignorance. May I tell you that today the world is saturated with that. It’s not that people don’t worship. Oh, they have zeal, but it’s ignorant worship. Do you know what a fanatic is? Somebody who has lost his direction and doubles his speed. That’s what these Samaritans were doing. Jesus said, “You’re

worshiping in ignorance. You don't know what you are worshiping." Now, that's the Samaritans.

What about the Jews? While the Samaritans had ignorance and zeal, the Jews had the truth, but they didn't have any zeal. The Jews had dead orthodoxy. Now, I would reference to you Mark chapter 7 and verse 6. Jesus is speaking to them. "He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

Now, over here you have ignorant zeal; over here you have dead orthodoxy. Now, that's the other part of the world today. Some people are worshiping with ignorant zeal and others with dead orthodoxy. Some fry in fanaticism, and some freeze in formalism, but they don't have the vitality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, folks, listen. The answer here is not formalism or fanaticism; it is true worship—true worship. We don't have to have enthusiastic heresy, we don't have to have lifeless orthodoxy, we don't have to have heat without light, or light without heat; we need true worship. Do you know, it'll be a great day in your life, it'll be a great day in any church, when you stop enduring religion and start enjoying true worship. I want you to understand this, folks. This is the bottom line. This is the highest good. This is the ultimate privilege: to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Now, look again, if you will, in verse 23. Jesus said to this woman, "The hour cometh, and now is when the true worshipers...—underscore that—the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Now, look at that word worship. Do you see it? That word comes from really two words: worth and ship. You see, worship deals with worth. You show me how you worship, and I will tell you what God is worth to you. You show me how you worship and, my dear friend, I'll tell you what you think of God. If your worship is not true worship, you have a low estimation of God. Worship is all that we are responding to all that God is revealed in Jesus Christ. That's what worship is.

Now, friend, worship goes beyond a church service. Worship goes beyond music. Worship goes beyond, if you're in a liturgical church, candles and incense. Again, I want to tell you that worship is all that you are responding to all that God is.

Now, you're going to worship something. You see, listen. Man is incurably religious. Man has a God-shaped vacuum, and he's trying to fill that vacuum, so you're going to worship something. If you don't worship the true God, you're going to worship in dead orthodoxy or ignorant zeal, or you're going to worship some idol. Anything that you love more, fear more, serve more than the Almighty is your idol. It may be a movie star. It may be a sports idol. It may be money. It may be pleasure. It may be illicit sex.

Is next Sunday the Super Bowl? For some people, that's a no-brainer. If they had to choose between the Super Bowl and church, they'd choose the Super Bowl. You think

about it. You think about it. Anything that you love more, fear more, serve more than Almighty God is an idol. And there's no greater sin than idolatry.

Now, if you don't practice true worship, you will find a substitute for worship, because nature abhors a vacuum. Some worship images. Today, you can go into what is called a house of worship, and you'll find images; people lighting candles and putting candles in front of those images; people bowing down and kissing those images. They call that worship. You say, "Why do you have those images?" "Well, they remind us of the one true God." Suppose a woman walks into a room and finds her husband embracing another woman, and he says, "Now, wait a minute, sweetheart. Don't get the wrong idea. She just reminds me so much of you."

Oh, friend, graven images are not a substitute for true worship. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. There is no image, no likeness, that you can use as a substitute for God. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 25: "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." Now, what is the meaning of true worship? It is worshiping God in spirit and in truth.

II. The Motive of True Worship

Now, secondly, what is the motive of true worship? Why do we do this? Look again in verse 23: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." If you don't mind marking in your Bible, mark the word spirit and mark the word truth. But then it goes on to say, "For the Father seeketh such to worship him." Now, why would we worship? Because that's what God seeks. That's what God seeks. That's what God wants of you. Say to yourself, God wants me to worship. The Father seeks that for two major reasons. Reason number one is for what worship does for the worshiper, what worship will do to you. You see, we become like what we worship. That's the reason idolatry is such a sin. First, the man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. We become like what we worship. Now, that's true in the negative sense; it's also true in the positive sense. The more you worship God—are you listening?—the more you worship God, the more you will become like God.

If you have an old-fashioned fireplace with a poker—that is, a piece of iron that you arrange the wood with—you leave that poker in the fire very long, and before long the fire will be in the poker. When you worship God, it is not very long until you become like what you worship. And God's fire will be in you. We become like what we worship. Put down in your margin 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18: "But we all, with an open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." As you contemplate the Lord, as you worship the Lord, as you keep your heart open to the Lord, you will be changed more

and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I ask you a question? Do other people see Jesus in you? Do they? I mean, don't answer it rhetorically; answer it sincerely in your heart. Are you being changed day by day by day into the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? To spend time with God worshipping will make you godly. We become like what we spend time with. They say even a husband and wife, when they live together for a long time, begin to look like each other. And Joyce is getting worried.

Why do we worship? Because of what worship does for us, but not only for what worship does for us, but because of what God desires for Himself. God desires worship for Himself. The need for worship is rooted in the very nature of God. How did Jesus describe God in this passage on worship? Listen very carefully and don't miss this. "The Father seeketh such to worship him"—"the Father seeketh such to worship him." Now, you're going to get an idea of why God desires worship. And let me say this: Father is not what God is like; Father is what God is. We have these feminists today trying to talk about Mother God. That is absolute, unmitigated gall and ignorance. God is Father! Now, we don't get our idea of God from our fatherhood; we get an idea of our fatherhood from God. That's not to put women down at all, but God is Father. If you take away the Fatherhood of God, you miss the entire thing in the Bible. God is Father! Jesus' favorite term for the Almighty is Father. He used that over 70 times in the Scripture. Now, that's very important. God is our heavenly Father.

Do you know there are things about God you'll never understand? I don't even know if you'll understand them when you get into glory. God's omnipotence; His limitless power. God's omniscience; He knows everything. God's omnipresence; He is everywhere. God's eternity; He never had a beginning, never has an ending. Those are concepts beyond the human mind, but you don't have to understand them to know and love God.

When I was a little boy, my daddy would go off to work, and I would see my daddy kiss my mother goodbye. My daddy always dressed up when he went to work. He was a very spiffy guy. And he dressed up, kissed my mother goodbye. He had a little valise or thing that he kept his papers in. And he would go off. I would be a boy, four or five years old. My daddy would go to work. I would watch him leave. I had no idea what he did, what his job was. I didn't know that. But I'll tell you one thing. I knew my daddy! Are you listening? You don't have to understand all of the intricacies of Almighty God—His omniscience, His omnipotence. You don't have to understand how He keeps the sun, moon, and stars in orbit to call Him Father if you've been born again. You see, this thing of worship is rooted in the Fatherhood of God. Do you know what my father wanted from me? He didn't want me to understand his profession; he wanted me to love him.

You see, when we worship, we're just responding to the Father's love. I love my father because he first loved me. There's something about a father's heart that wants the love of his children.

This past week we had a banquet here at the church. It was a father-daughter banquet. And the fathers brought their girls to this banquet. I wish you could have seen those beautiful little girls all dressed up with their daddies at that banquet. It was wonderful. And my daughter Janice and I were the program. And Janice stood up first and spoke of what her father meant to her. I could not tell you how my heart was blessed, how deeply moved I was, how grateful I was, to hear my child speak not only privately to me, but openly and publicly of her love and her devotion to her father. Now, friend, that's the way God's great heart is. You see, God wants us to worship, first of all, because of what worship does for us. It changes us. And then what worship does for God. It gives Him pleasure. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." A father wants love.

Now, I've got some good news for you. Every Father's Day little children wonder, what can I get for daddy? What can we give daddy? Well, you could give him some slippers or you can give him a necktie, but you know what your daddy wants? Love! Love! What can you give to God today? You say, "Well, I can't sing like these people sang. I can't preach like so-and-so. I can't do this. I can't do that." There is nobody who can love God better than you can. And that's what God wants more than anything else. Isn't that great? Nobody on earth can love God better than you can, and that's what God wants more than anything else. "The Father seeketh such to worship him."

III. The Method of True Worship

Now, let's move to the third and final thing. I've talked to you about the meaning and the motive. Let me talk to you about the method of true worship. Look again now in verses 23 and 24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Now, Jesus is speaking to this woman. Now, she talks about worship, but she doesn't have real worship. It is ignorant worship. What is the method of true worship? Jesus said we're to worship in spirit. Do you see that? Now, He's not talking about the Holy Spirit. He's talking about the human spirit. That is, worship comes out of the inner man. Romans chapter 1 and verse 9, Paul said, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit." He's talking about the human spirit. Now, the human spirit cannot worship unless it is enjoined with the Holy Spirit, but God the Holy Spirit comes into the human spirit to help us to worship. That's the reason you have to be saved and Spirit-filled to truly worship. Now, if you're having trouble worshiping, may I tell you what your problem

is? It's in your spirit. If you get bored in church, the problem is your inner spirit.

Joyce had a brother. He's now in heaven. He was a sort of a playboy; raced boats and automobiles and was a businessman. Joyce and I prayed for him and prayed for him and prayed for him. Every now and then, grudgingly, he'd come hear me preach. And then he got saved. Not only did he get saved; he got saved-and-a-half; I mean, radically, dramatically saved. And he came to hear me preach, and he said, "Adrian, boy, that's great. You don't preach like you used to." I said, "Gordon, I preach the same way I've been preaching. You don't hear like you used to." Listen, friend. When you get your heart right, a service is not going to be boring. You've never been in a boring worship service. There is no such thing. You worship in spirit and then you worship in truth. Now, worship that is not built on truth is not true worship. Worship built on truth goes beyond spirit. It goes beyond subjectivism. Psalm 145, verse 18: "The LORD is high unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." Your worship of God will never rise above your knowledge based on truth. That's why from this pulpit, as long as I'm pastor, and please, God, when the next pastor comes, there will always be an exposition of truth. You see, you cannot worship God ignorantly. Jesus said, "You don't know what you're worshiping, woman. God must be worshiped in truth." Worship is a loving response to the God revealed in the Bible. That's why we study the Bible.

Some people say, "Well, what are we going to have today? Are we going to have a Bible study or a worship service?" Yes! Some people think, well, when we sing and pray and praise and fellowship, that's worship. Friend, the preaching of the Word of God is worship. We worship God in truth. And if we don't do that, the church becomes syrupy. It becomes subjective rather than objective. Now, we're to worship Him with songs and worship Him with understanding. Here's a great verse for you, Brother Jim, and all in our music department. This is Psalm 47, verse 7: "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." That's spirit, and that is truth. If you have all emotionalism, you blow up. If you have all truth, you dry up. But if you have spirit and truth, you grow up. Jesus said we're to worship in spirit and in truth.

Well, very quickly—I must close. Jesus gave us the great commandment, and it deals with worship. Mark 12, verse 30: "And thou shall love the Lord thy God—now, listen—with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

Remember when I said, what is the highest good? What is the bottom line? What is the ultimate privilege? Here Jesus is saying it so clearly. We're to love God. How are we going to love Him? I want you to write down four words and put them in your purse, your pocketbook, your shirt pocket, and carry them with you this week.

The first word is passionately. We're to love our God passionately; that is, with all of

our heart, as much as in us is. Half-hearted worship is an insult to Almighty God. Does God have all of your heart passionately?

Number two: You're to love Him selflessly, with all of your soul. The soul is the self. You're not to be self-centered. You're self-centered by nature. Have you ever heard anybody say, "Well, I came to church and I didn't get anything out of it?" Who said you were supposed to get anything out of it? Ask yourself this question: Did God receive anything from my worship? Did God get something out of it? We're here to glorify God. We're to serve Him selflessly. When you take your mind off of yourself and put your mind on God and stop saying, "What am I going to get?" and begin to say, "What am I going to give?" the church is transformed into a worshiping church.

And we are to love Him thoughtfully, with all of our heart. A full heart's no excuse for an empty head. Serve the Lord with knowledge and wisdom. Love Him in spirit and in truth. And then we're to love Him practically, with all of our strength—everything we do. "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God."

Conclusion

What is worship? It's giving God glory. You can change the place where you go to work tomorrow morning if you'll just change your bosses. You don't work for that man; you work for God. That's exactly what the Bible teaches. The Bible says, "Serve your masters, according to the flesh, as if they were Jesus, for you serve the Lord God." Your workplace can be your temple of devotion, your lampstand of witness, as you worship God with all of your strength. That's what Jesus was telling this woman. She said, "Do we worship here or do we worship there?" Jesus said, "Woman, you worship in spirit and in truth." There is no place that is not a holy place. There is no ground that is not sacred ground. There is no time that should not be a time of worship. So when we come to church to the worship service, we don't come merely to worship—listen, church—we bring our worship to church! When you come in here with a heart aflame, if you come in here and hardly can wait to sing these songs, to fellowship, to love to study the Word of God, then this becomes a worshiping church. And that, my friend, will make Bellevue Church in the future the church that God desires her to be. And when I step aside, O God, O God, let this church be a worshiping church. Amen and amen.

Bow your heads in prayer. Our Father and our God, we pray as individuals, and I pray for myself, that You would teach us, Lord, to worship in spirit and in truth with true worship. In Your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. Remember what I told you, that you worship in spirit? And you cannot worship in spirit unless you're first born again. When you are born again, God's Spirit begins to work in your spirit, the human spirit, so you can praise God. To be born

again means to be saved. It means to have Christ in your heart. And how do you receive Him into your heart? By faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Believe that Jesus Christ paid your sin debt with His shed blood on the cross. Believe that God raised Him from the dead to show that He is the Son of God. Believe that He can save you, wants to save you, and will save you, if you'll trust Him. And then trust Him with a childlike faith. Don't ask for any special feeling. Don't ask for a vision. Just put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him to save you. Bow your heads in prayer. Father God, I pray now that many in this building will give their hearts to Jesus. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to be welcoming those of you who will be coming forward. If you're in the balcony, a minister will be here under that banner in the corner that says Redeemer, or if you're on this side of the balcony, a minister under that banner that says Messiah, to welcome those of you in the balcony who will be coming. And today, if once and for all, now and forever, as best you know how you'll give all you know of you to all you know of Jesus, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. "Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?" Say, "I'm trusting Jesus." You can say that. "I'm trusting Jesus." "Pastor, what will happen?" Well, number one: we'll rejoice. Number two: we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Number three: we'll answer any questions that we can answer from the Word of God, and we'll seal it with you in prayer. We'll treat you kindly and courteously, and I can tell you, you can leave this house of God today twice-born and ready for real worship, the bottom line of everything. Others of you are saved and you know it, and you need a church home. I want to invite you to come and say, "I want to place my membership in this wonderful church." Some of you may be thinking, you know, we're going to wait till we see who our next pastor is before we place our membership. Friend, you're going to miss one of the greatest blessings in the world if you don't be a member here when we're going through this glorious time in our church. And I want to invite you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here," if you know and love the Lord Jesus. If you have not had believer's baptism, as we understand it, we'd want the joy of baptizing you as a believer in Christ. Let's stand together. You step out and come. On the very first stanza you come to Jesus.

Having Strong Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 10, 2000

Main Scripture Text: John 4:46–54

Outline

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 - A. Hear the Word of God
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Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn, please, to John chapter 4—the Gospel of John—and in a few moments we're going to be reading in verse 45. But let me just thank you again for the love that you have shown to Joyce and myself and our family. How blessed we are! No pastor ever had a greater, more wonderful, loving congregation than you. And, you know, the Bible says, "The lips of the flatterer will be cut off," (Psalm 12:3) and I want to keep mine, so that's not flattery. I mean that with all of my heart.

And I want to speak to you today about faith: "Having Strong Faith." Now, in our economy, the dollar is the medium of exchange; but in the kingdom of heaven, faith is the medium of exchange. The Bible says, "*According to your faith be it unto you.*" (Matthew 9:29) Whatever we receive from God is according to our faith; not according to our friends, not according to our family, not according to our fortune, not according to our feelings, not according to our fate—I hope you're not watching the horoscope—but according to our faith. "*According to your faith be it unto you.*"

Not only do we need to possess faith; what we need is for faith to possess us. We need a mighty faith because we have a mighty God.

Doubt sees the obstacles.
Faith sees the way.
Doubt sees the darkest night.
Faith sees the day.
Doubt dreads to take a step.
Faith soars on high.
Doubt questions "Who believes?"
Faith answers "I."
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

But, you know, we need a strong faith—not a weak faith, but a strong faith. And I'm going to share with you from the Word of God a story about a man who came to Jesus—and this man had a weak faith. I would call it a superficial faith—even worse, a superstitious faith. But he went from that superstitious faith to a strong faith to a saving faith. And that's what I want us to see today, and I hope that you today will grow in faith.

Now this man in the story that we're going to read about was a nobleman. That is, he had much to commend him. He had many resources at his hand, but he had a problem. And, you know, many of us, no matter what we have in our bank accounts and what we have on our biographical sketch, we have problems that only God can solve. This man had a problem that was a son that was sick. And this nobleman wanted Jesus to heal his son. And the dark soil of that problem was the soil in which the seed of faith would grow.

Now, if you want a strong faith... Do you really? Would you like to really believe God and please God? You know, the Bible says, *"Without faith it is impossible to please [God]."* (Hebrews 11:6) No matter what else you do—I don't care how beautifully you sing this morning, how sacrificially you give, how circumspectly you walk, how faithfully you serve—if you're not believing God, you're not pleasing God. *"Without faith it is impossible to please [God]."* And the greater your faith, the greater glory God gets; the more pleased He is with it. And by faith man gives God pleasure, and by faith God gives man treasure—real treasure.

So, let's see here something about a strong faith. Begin reading with me in verse 46—chapter 4, verse 46: *"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he"—that is, the son—"was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."* Now Jesus was not giving that just simply as a statement of fact; He was giving that as a rebuke to this man. Jesus is rebuking this man who was looking for signs and wonders. *"The nobleman saith*

unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word.” Now, if you don’t mind marking your Bible, would you underscore that? Would you underscore that? *“And the man believed the word...”*—now, what we have here is in opposition: signs and wonders and the Word—that’s what we have. First, Jesus rebukes him: *“Except [you] see signs and wonders, [you’ll] not believe.”* And then Jesus speaks to him, and there’s a transformation, and now it says, *“And the man believed the word.”* What you have on the one side are wonders, and what you have on the other side is the Word. Now, that’s very key, so I hope you keep your heart and mind on that—*“And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday...”*—that’s very interesting, too; mark it right now—*“Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.”* That’s probably, according to their time, about one p.m. *“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.”* Well, I thought he’d already believed; now it mentions he believes again. *“This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”* (John 4:46–54)

Now, are you ready to have a strong faith? Would you really like to have a strong faith? Would you like to be able to believe God and lay believing hands on the promises of God? Well, let me lay three things on your heart this morning.

I. The Problem of a Superficial Faith

First of all, what I want to call the problem of a superstitious faith, or, if you rather, a problem of a superficial faith. It makes no difference how you say it. At first, when this man first met Jesus, his faith was almost nonexistent. Look again in verse 48; go back and look at it: *“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”* (John 4:48) This man had a faith that was based on signs and wonders. Evidently, his motto was, “Seeing is believing.” “God, if you’ll just give me sign, if you’ll just give me a wonder, then I can believe.” And what had happened to this man, therefore, is he is dependent upon his five senses; he’s not dependent upon the Word of God.

Now, doubtless, this man had heard that Jesus had turned water into wine. Look, if you will, in verse 46—it’s not put there just by happenstance: *“So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.”* (John 4:46) Now Jesus had done a miracle. The first miracle that Jesus performed was turning water into wine. This man had heard about this, and he was taken with this, and so he was kind of, as we would say in the vernacular today, he was *blown*

away by this miracle. Here was somebody who could turn water into wine. But Jesus knew that miracles—signs and wonders—are really very little good in strong faith.

Now you may not believe that. If you're like I am, when you were a younger Christian, you were saying, "O God, I just want to see a miracle—I mean, a genuine, industrial-strength miracle; I mean, one that cannot be explained any other way except that you supernaturally do something." I'm ashamed to admit it, Brother Jim, but when I was in college, I got in the room one time and prayed and asked God to move a chair from one side to the other. I'm so glad the devil didn't nudge that chair. But I wanted to see, and I was just saying, "Now, Lord, I want to see something that, you know, I can say I have seen, I have felt, I have experienced a miracle." How many of you have kind of been that way some time? Let me see your hand. Be honest. Come on now. Now I've already confessed. I mean, we want a sign. We want a wonder. We want a miracle.

And this man had heard about Jesus turning water into wine, and so he's coming now to Jesus. He's coming all the way from Capernaum, about seventeen miles away, and he's saying, "Now, come down and heal my son. Anybody that can turn water into wine can heal my son." And Jesus rebukes him. Jesus says, "*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*" (John 4:48) That was the same way that they were when Jesus turned water into wine.

Now you're in chapter 4. It would be easy for you to just turn back two chapters to chapter 2 and look at it. Look at it—chapter 2, verse 23: "*Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.*" "Well," you say, "isn't that good? They believed in Jesus when they saw the miracles that He did." But notice verse 24: "*But Jesus did not commit himself unto them...*"—and the word *commit* and the word *believe* in the Greek are the same words. They believed in Jesus, but He didn't believe in them. It was a superficial faith. And notice what it goes on to say—"*He did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*" (John 2:23–25) Jesus knew that these people were following Him—they were believing on Him—because of the miracles. They didn't have strong faith; they had superficial faith—almost superstitious faith.

And this man in John chapter 4 has plenty of brothers in the twentieth century today. You would be amazed how many people today want signs and wonders. They want visions. They want emotions. They want dreams. They want liver shivers, and icicles going up and down their spine, and angels playing tic-tac-toe on their ribs. They want something so that they can say, "Hey, I know—I know—it is real. Now I have seen. Now I have touched. Now I have smelled. Now I have heard. And now I know it is real." "O God, give me a sign. O God,

give me a wonder.” And I want to tell you, my brother Mark, that the world is full of people just like that, and many of them sit in our churches today.

It is amazing what some people will believe. In December 1996, in my home state of Florida, something happened—there was a customer in the Seminole Finance Corporation who looked out the window across the street to a car sales place, a place called Ugly Duckling Car Sales, and this person saw on the window of the Ugly Duckling Car Sales a picture of what appeared to be the Virgin Mary just somehow in the glass—just different colors in the glass in the sunlight; it wasn’t painted on there or anything. But she just saw what appeared to be an image of the Virgin Mary. Well, she went out and said, “Look, I have seen a miracle. I have seen the Virgin Mary on the windowpane of the Ugly Duckling Car Sales.” Well, do you understand that, folks? Down there in Florida—it was near Christmastime—they had a traffic jam of nearly sixty thousand people coming to see the Virgin Mary on a windowpane. And some brought flowers to place it beneath the window. Some were sure that the image was an absolute miracle. Digna Feldman brought her twenty-month-old grandson to see the image. She said, “This is a miracle. I pray for her”—that is, the image on the windowpane—“to protect him.” And then, there was another woman named Tammy Parker, who said, “Oh, she’s beautiful. This is unbelievable.” I would say, “That’s right: it is unbelievable.” And she brought her daughter and prayed to the image on the windowpane, that God would perform a miracle—that the image on the windowpane would perform a miracle—and heal her daughter of a disability.

Now Jesus did perform miracles—no ifs, ands, and buts about that. And why did He do it? Why did Jesus give signs and wonders? Well, He did that to authenticate His ministry. Let me give you a couple of verses to put in your margin. One is Acts chapter 2, verse 22. Now, you don’t turn to it. I’ve copied it out to save us some time, because I have lots to say today. Just put it in your margin—Acts chapter 2, verse 22: *“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.”* (Acts 2:22) Jesus did signs and wonders. You cannot take that out of the Word of God, nor should we wish to.

Well, why did He do signs and wonders? Well, we’re in the Gospel of John. If you were to fast-forward to John chapter 20 and look in verses 30 and 31, you read, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written...”*—now, listen; listen carefully—*“these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ,”*—*“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ”*—*“the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:30–31) Now God did miracles to authenticate the ministry of Jesus. But the miracle was not for the miracle’s sake. The

miracle was that you might believe on Jesus and have eternal life—not that you might seek a miracle, but a Messiah; not a sign, but a Savior.

Now it's also clear that the apostles did signs and wonders. Some people think that we ought to do signs and wonders because they were done in the New Testament; but these were the signs and wonders done by the apostles. Put this verse down—2 Corinthians 12, verse 12: *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”* (2 Corinthians 12:12) Now the Apostle Paul had power to do miracles—*“signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”* An God authenticated the ministry of the apostles with signs and wonders. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 4—put that verse down: *“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”* (Hebrews 2:4)

Now they did not have the power to do signs and wonders according to their own will, but God took the apostles, and because they were apostles and they were setting the foundation of our faith, God authenticated their ministry with signs and wonders. But, folks, that is not the program for the whole age. God has given us something better than signs and wonders, and I want to show that to you.

A. What Is Wrong with Demanding a Sign?

Listen. What is wrong with demanding a sign? What is wrong with what this man first did when Jesus rebuked him and said, *“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe?”* (John 4:48) As a matter of fact, Jesus said, *“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”* (Matthew 12:39) Boy, that's pretty strong: *“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”* Well, why is it so bad?

1. It Is Dishonoring to God

Well, first of all, it's dishonoring to God. Why is it dishonoring to God for you to say, “God, give me a sign—give me a wonder—so that I can believe”? Well, we have His Word.

Suppose I come to my son, and I say, “Now, son, I want you to know that I love you, and I have deposited a thousand dollars in the bank for you. It's in your account. I've opened up the account for you, and I've done that for you. Son, you've got a thousand dollars in the bank.” Suppose he says to me, “Dad, how do I know I have a thousand dollars in the bank?” I said, “Well, I just told you.” “Well, you know, Dad, it sure would mean a whole lot to me if you would show me the deposit slip—I mean, if you could just take me down there to the bank and let me see it so I would know it.” I say, “Son, I just told you.” “No, but I want a sign. I want a wonder. I want something that I can see. I want something that I can touch. I want something that I can taste. I want something that I can smell. Don't just give me your word.” You know, the Bible says, *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.”* (1 John 5:10)

Now, there was a man named Thomas in the Bible. We call him doubting Thomas. Jesus was raised from the dead. The apostles were preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, according as He had promised in His Word. Do you know what old Thomas said? He said, “Unless I put my finger in the nail prints and in His side where the wound is,” he said, “I’ll not believe.” (John 20:25) Now I want you to go John 20 and look at it. Look in John 20. Just turn over to it—John 20, verse 29. Jesus appeared to him and said, “Okay, Tom, put your hand there. Go ahead. Thrust your hand into my side.” And notice in verse 29: *“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:”*—did Thomas get a lot of credit for that? Notice what Jesus said—*“blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:29–31)

You see, was it good for Thomas to believe after he had a sign, a wonder—after he had felt with his hands? Well, it was okay, but he missed the blessing of simply believing the Word of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2. It Is Deceiving to Man

Why is seeking signs and wonders dangerous? Number one: It dishonors God. Number two: It can be deceiving to you. It can be very, very deceiving. Signs and wonders can easily deceive. Joyce and I were talking this morning as we were getting dressed for church about the coming Antichrist, and I said, “Joyce, I’m going to be speaking about that a little bit this morning.” There’s coming Satan’s superman, who will be the devil incarnate. And do you know what he’s going to do to authenticate his ministry? Signs and wonders. And do you know, Jesus said, *“If it were possible, [he would] deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24) Put this verse down—2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9. It speaks of him—*“even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan”*—now, don’t miss this—*“with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9) The Antichrist will be able to make you think black is white, good is bad, and cut your mother’s throat with a smile on your face because of the ability that he will have to deceive *“with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* The devil can do signs and lying wonders—and will do them—through his Antichrist.

Let me give you this verse: Revelation chapter 13—put that down—verses 13 and 14—speaking of the false prophet, who is the sinister minister of propaganda for the Antichrist that is coming. Listen to this: *“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and”*—watch this now—*“deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the*

beast;”—the beast, now, is Antichrist—“*saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.*”

(Revelation 13:13–14) Why, this propaganda agent for the Antichrist has the ability to do signs and wonders so that people will literally worship Satan’s superman. So, not only to demand signs and wonders dishonors God; but, secondly, it may be very deceptive to you.

Why, he says that he makes fire come down out of heaven. Now, what would that be? I don’t know—maybe some dazzling display, maybe an atomic explosion in outer space. I don’t know what it may be. But suppose I say, “O God, I want to know whether or not I am right with you. I want to know whether I’m going to heaven. God, would you give me a sign?” Now I don’t just say, “Lord, would you move a chair across the room?” I say, “Lord, would you just give me a sign in the heavens?” And when I say that, boy, the heavens are ablaze from pole to pole. I see shimmering fire. God and I are tied. Boy, I mean, I’ve got it made. There’s a sign—I have a sign. Now I know.

The judgment comes. I stand before the Lord. I have never repented of my sin. I’ve never trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I have never been twice born, and my soul is dropping into hell. And I say, “God, how can you do that? You gave me a sign.” And the devil says, “You fool! You fool! God didn’t give you that sign; I’m the one that made fire come down out of heaven to deceive you.”

The Bible says that “*if it were possible, [Satan would] deceive the very elect.*” (Matthew 24:24) And don’t you let some wonder-worker, some miracle-worker, some sign-giver, some soothsayer, some emissary from Satan deceive you, and you go falling off after something else because of some sign and some wonder. Jesus said, “*A sinful and generation seeketh after a sign.*” (Matthew 12:39) It is dishonoring to God. And it may be very deceptive to man.

II. The Progression of Strong Faith

Now, let’s move to the second point. I want you to see not only the problem of superficial faith, superstitious faith; but notice the progression of strong faith. I want you to see how this man moved from a weak faith to a very strong, solid, substantive faith. And I want to give you the steps, because they are progressive steps here. He moves from signs and wonders to the Word. And let me give you these steps.

A. Hear the Word of God

Step number one: He heard the Word of God. Look, if you will, in verse 50: “*Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word.*” (John 4:50) Number one: He heard the Word of God. Now, let me tell you what faith is. Faith is not naming it and

claiming it; faith is not receiving from God what you want. Faith is accepting from God what He gives. Hear the Word of God.

Notice this man. He's a nobleman. He's trying to tell Jesus what to do. Look in verse 49: *"The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down."* (John 4:49) That is, "You come with me. Come on, Lord. I'm going to take you to Capernaum." Now, notice verse 50: *"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way."* (John 4:50) He said, "You come." Jesus said, "You go—you go. You're not here to tell me what to do. You're not here to demand me. You're not here to command me. You're here to hear me, to listen to me, to get a word from me." Romans 10, verse 14, says this: *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Romans 10:14) And then Romans 10, verse 17: *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17)

Now, folks, if you want strong faith, you've got to hear the Word of God. Let me tell you what faith is—listen to me: Faith is taking God at His word. Did that sink in? Faith is taking God at His word. *"The man believed the word."* (John 4:50) Jesus said to him, and he heard Jesus. It's very important that, if you would have faith, number one, you must know what God has said. And if you want others to have faith, you must tell them what God has said. And that's the reason Paul said, *"And how [can] they hear without a preacher?"*

This church that is so blessed of God is blessed of God because of this sacred desk, not the man behind it. But from the inception of this church in 1903, this church has been based on the Word of God, the preaching of the Word of God—not signs, not wonders, not ecstasies, not supposed miracles. We have a lot of churches who advertise signs and miracles and wonders. They advertise them and don't do them. Jesus did them and didn't advertise them. The Word of God.

B. Believe the Word of God

Step number one in having a strong faith—number one—is to hear the Word of God. Number two is to believe the Word of God. Now, look, if you will, in verse 50: *"And the man believed the word."* Do you see that? *"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word."* (John 4:50) That's step number two in faith. It's not enough to hear the Word of God. You can sit here and listen to me preach this morning; but if you don't believe the Word of God, you're not going to have faith. You have to believe the Word of God.

"Well," you say, "Adrian, I can't believe. That's my problem: I just can't believe." May I tell you, sir—may I tell you, madam—that you can believe if you want to? The Bible says, *"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar."* (1 John 5:10) "Well," you say, "I have

intellectual problems.” No, you don’t. You don’t have intellectual problems. Your problem is not intellectual; it is moral. Your problem is not in your head; it is in your heart. You say, “Well, I know some intellectuals who don’t believe the Bible.” Well, I know some intellectuals who do. You say, “Well, I know some foolish people who believe the Bible.” I know some foolish people who don’t. What we believe is not contrary to reason; it goes beyond reason. Faith is a gift of God. And if a person wants to believe, God will enable that person to believe. And never say to God, “God, it is not my fault if I don’t believe.” The Bible says, *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:23)

You see, faith is not seeing signs and wonders. You know what faith is? Faith is a response to the character of God. That’s why, when Jesus came to this earth, He laid aside all of the glory, the splendor, the majesty that He had that was inherently His, but He kept His deity in human flesh and He walked in sandaled feet. And when we saw Him, there was *“no form nor comeliness...[nor] beauty that we should desire him.”* (Isaiah 53:2) He didn’t come in a jeweled chariot in a dazzling display of glory; He came through the portals of a virgin’s womb—born in a smelly stable, worked in a carpenter’s shop. But yet there was in Jesus Christ the grace, the glory, the fullness of God, that when a man’s heart was right, he heard Jesus, he knew that Jesus is speaking with authority, and his heart responds to Him.

Listen. When your heart is right, your heart will respond to the Word of God in faith. Just like my eye responds to light when my eye is right, and my ear responds to sound when my ear is right, your heart will respond to God when your heart is right—and that heart response is faith. It is not that God does miracles—no. When God speaks—speaks through His Word—there’s something in you that says, “That is true.” The Holy Spirit of God whispers *amen* to your heart. That’s the reason before I come out here, as I did this morning, I get on my knees and pray—because I can only preach truth, but the Holy Spirit of God imparts truth. And He will impart it to your heart.

C. Obey the Word of God

You must hear the Word of God. Number two: You must believe the Word of God. *“Jesus saith unto him.”* And then it says, *“And the man believed the word [of God].”* (John 4:50) Now you’re not there yet. Here’s the third step: Not only must you hear the Word of God; not only must you believe the Word of God; you must obey the Word of God. Begin now in verse 50, and look at it: *“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way.”* Now, watch this: *“And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way”—“he went his way.”* *“And as he was now going down,”* and so forth. (John 4:50–51) He does exactly what Jesus tells him to do. This is what the Bible calls *“the obedience of faith”* (Romans 16:26) in Romans 16, verse 26.

Do you know what real faith is? *Real faith is belief with legs on it.* Real faith—don't miss that—it is belief with legs on it. James told us in James chapter 2, verse 26: *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”* (James 2:26) You don't have strong faith if you do not obey the Word of God. You hear the Word of God, you believe the Word of God, and then you obey the Word of God. Had this man still had his superficial, superstitious faith, he would have still have been there begging Jesus for a sign, a wonder. But no, he just leaves it with Jesus. He does exactly what Jesus tells him to do, and he believes the Word of God.

D. Rest in the Word of God

Now I want you to notice something very interesting now concerning faith. After he believes the Word of God—and here's the fourth and the final step by which shows he has a strong faith—he is resting in the Word of God. Look, if you will now, in verse 51: *“And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour in which he began to amend.”* Now, don't miss this: *“And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth.”* (John 4:51–53) Now the point is this: it has been twenty-four hours—twenty-four hours. “When did my son get well?” “Yesterday.” “At what time?” “Well, about one in the afternoon.” And the man said, “Well, that's just when I was talking to Jesus. That's just when Jesus said to me, *‘Go thy way; thy son liveth.’*” (John 4:50)

Now, I want to ask you a question: If you had a son that was seventeen miles away, and Jesus had said, *“Go thy way; thy son liveth,”* what would you have done? You'd have gone straight home—most of us would—straight home! Why? To see—to see. Now there are about seventeen miles. He could have been there in five or eight hours by foot. He could have been there in two hours by chariot. He was a nobleman. He certainly wouldn't be on his feet. But twenty-four hours have passed—twenty-four hours have passed—and he's not gone home yet. Tell me why? I really don't know why. Maybe he's so tired. He's been sitting up by his son's bedside all this time, and his son's at the point of death. Now Jesus says, “Your son is alive.” He says, “Fine. Thank you.” He is resting in what our Lord has done, and it is what I want to call the rest of faith. Here's a scripture that I copied out for you—Psalm 37, verses 5 to 7: *“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.”* (Psalm 37:5–7)

Now he's not demanding proof. He's not even hotfooting it home to see if it has happened. The rest of faith is the mark of real faith—of real faith. You know, He says He's

going to *“bring forth [your] righteousness...as the noonday.”* (Psalm 37:6) Have you ever thought about that? The Lord says, “You just rest in me.” It’s just like the sun coming up. Friend, you can’t hurry the sunrise, but you can’t stop it. And you can’t hurry God, and you can’t stop Him. The Bible says, *“He that believeth [in Him] shall not make haste.”* (Isaiah 28:16) And here’s this man, he’s just gone from a superficial faith to a strong faith. He hears the Word of God. He believes the Word of God. He obeys the Word of God. He rests in the Word of God. And if you don’t learn how to do that—you listen to your pastor now—you’re going to be blown about; you’re going to be stampeded by all kinds of things. You get a bulldog grip on the Word of God, and don’t be trying to live by emotions and feelings and visions and dreams, signs and wonders. They had their purpose.

Now, if I get sick, or I have a loved one that’s sick, can I pray and ask God to heal that loved one? Of course! Of course! And does God heal in answer to prayer? Of course! Could that be a sign and wonder? Of course! But it’s not something that causes me to believe in Him. God doesn’t always heal the sick. I come to Him and I ask Him. And I thank God that He heals, and I believe He has healed me. Is it wrong to go to a doctor? Not at all! Jesus said in Matthew 9, verse 12: “They that are whole don’t need a doctor, but they that are sick.” (Matthew 9:12) “Well,” you say, “He’s talking about spiritual things.” Yes, but He used a truth to illustrate spiritual things with. He wouldn’t have illustrated spiritual things with a lie. Jesus said sick people need a doctor. So what do you do if you get sick? You pray, and then you go to the doctor and do what the doctor tells you to do.

III. The Provision of Saving Faith

Now, here’s the last thing—and we’ve really got to hurry here. I want you to see now the provision of saving faith. We’ve talked about superficial faith, strong faith, and now it moves to saving faith. Look in verse 53: *“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.”* (John 4:53) Well, wait a minute. I thought he already believed. Well, no, this is a different kind of belief. He’s moving up another notch. The man believes now not in a miracle worker, but in a Messiah. This time the man is born again. He believes in Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

Can you imagine him getting home? What a time of rejoicing there must have been as they hugged! He sees his son—he’s well, and so forth—and then this man says, “Now, wait a minute. Let me tell you about Jesus. Let me tell you about the Messiah.” And they come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because that’s what the Gospel of John is written about: *“These [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and...believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31) Jesus did not come

as a healer; Jesus came as a Savior. Luke 19:10—Jesus said, “*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was] lost.*” And so He didn’t heal everybody. He went to the pool of Bethesda. There were many sick people there: He just healed one, as we’re going to see in another chapter. No, all of these are miracles that point to the greater miracle, which is the new birth.

I wrote a book—if you haven’t gotten it, you need to get a copy of it—called *Believe in Miracles, but Trust in Jesus*. Trust in Jesus. Don’t put your faith in miracles. The only reason for signs and miracles and wonders is to trust in Jesus.

Now, suppose this boy had gotten healed and he never got saved. Think about it. Suppose he got healed and then never got saved: then he’d live a few years, and die, and go to hell. That’s the reason so many people are seeking the wrong thing: They’re seeking a sign, a wonder, a miracle, rather than seeking Jesus, the Messiah. Listen. You hear the Word of God. You believe the Word of God. You obey the Word of God. And you rest in the Word of God. And, folks, whatever else God does, you can be certain.

Conclusion

I’m going to read something to you, and somebody sent me this. It’s one of the most moving things that I’ve ever read. A lady sent it to me. It was written by her father, who was sick. I want you to listen to it. It is very pertinent. Forgive me for reading it, but I don’t want to miss a word. Here’s what it is called: “Why I Follow Christ.” I received this several years ago. This person said:

“I’ve not seen clear, statistical evidence that fewer Christians die of cancer than nonbelievers, or that they are immune in greater degree from the diseases that afflict the human race. Some of the kindest, most selfless persons I have known have had more than their share of bad health. The fact that they belong to Christ did not insulate them from disease. Therefore I will not follow Christ for promised healing. I will not deny or dispute evidence of restoration of health. I will rejoice at every recovery from what seems to be hopeless, threatened death. I will not hesitate to pray for recovered health for my loved ones and acquaintances. I will set no limits on what God may do, but I will not follow Christ for promised healing.

“I see no sign that Christians escape disaster and accidents more often than others. I have helped dear friends empty muddy water out of dresser drawers and new appliances after a disastrous flood. I remember, as a child, taking clothes to a widow with five children whose house had burned to the ground. A bullet makes no detour around the body of a believer. Therefore I will not follow Christ for any promised protection from disaster. I will not scoff at amazing survivals nor deny that providence has and continues to work through

the good of God's own. I will continue to pray for protection from wicked men and tragedy, but I will not follow Christ for promised protection from accident or catastrophe.

"I do not observe that Christians are especially favored with prosperity. Like James, we have all seen the rich oppressing the poor. And justice is rarely perfect in this world. The psalmist has said that he had *'not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'* (Psalm 37:25) And in the deepest needs of life that is certainly true. But all of us have known people of integrity who have not prospered. Therefore I will not follow Christ for promised freedom from physical want or the hope of affluence.

"I am not sure that Christians have stronger personalities or fewer neuroses than nonbelievers. I do know that there is no bitterness like religious bitterness and no arrogance more insufferable. I have watched Christians suffer emotional and mental disabilities. And, though it may seem heretical, I'm not sure that I would really enjoy living in the same house with either the Apostle Peter or Paul"—that's interesting. "God wills that the mind of Christ be formed in us, and there's no doubt in my mind that the Christian's attitudes and actions will be improved by his Christianity. But I will not follow Christ for any promise of personality enhancement or perfection."

Now, listen to this: "Why, then, follow Christ? Why become a disciple of Jesus when life may become more complicated, as He so often warned? For one reason alone: In Jesus, we behold the face of God. He is the truth—the everlasting truth, God in the flesh. I know that in His life, death, and resurrection I am reconciled to God, the giver of life. (Romans 5:10) I believe that nothing can separate me from the love of God. (Romans 8:39) He has all power and goodness. I trust in Him and His promises. To Him, I offer my life—damaged or whole, brief or full of years, it matters not. He is the one certain thing in an uncertain world. He is to be worshiped not so something will happen to me or to the world—something already has happened to me and the world—but because He is God, who through Christ has reconciled the world to Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:18) He saves me. He is my justification. He is the center that holds. To worship the God of our salvation, to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, that alone is our vocation. We offer our lives to God not so as to be healthy, wealthy, or wise; not even so as to gain strength to do great things for Him; we offer our lives to Him because He alone has claim upon us."

Boy, is that not great? Is that not great? Don't be looking for some sign, some wonder, some miracle that's going to get you out. Let me tell you something. Jesus is the Savior. He suffered, lived, bled, and died for you—rose from the dead. And if you'll trust Him, I promise you, according to His Word, He will save you, and He will keep you. And one day we'll be gathered around the throne to give Him praise forever and ever and ever. Believe

in miracles, but trust in Jesus, and you go from a superficial faith to a strong faith to a saving faith. That's what matters.

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Doubt

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 19, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 4:46–54

“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.”

JOHN 4:50

Outline

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Introduction

Turn, would you please, to John chapter 4—the Gospel of John, chapter 4. Beyond miracles, and on to Jesus. John had a strategy, when he wrote the Gospel of John. He lists seven miracles; he calls these miracles signs. That is, they are miracles with a message; they're signs with a significance. And then, he says, there are many other things that Jesus did, but I took these seven miracles, and I arranged them to be a parade of miracles. And, at the conclusion, you're going to see that Jesus is the Christ. And then, I want you to believe that He is the Christ, the Messiah. And, when you believe, then you will have everlasting life.

Now, Jesus did not come to perform miracles; He came to save souls. And what we

need to do is to go beyond miracles and on to Jesus. I said a little while ago, I believe in miracles. But I don't trust in miracles; I trust in Jesus. Now, think about it. There are seven of these miracles. Last Wednesday night, we spoke of the first one, where Jesus turned the water into wine. That's found in John chapter two. And that tells us that Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointments, because the wines of this world run out. But the joy that He gives is always fresh, full, and free.

And now, we're going to find Jesus healing a nobleman's son. But that man has difficulty believing in Jesus. So, not only is Jesus God's answer to man's disappointments; Jesus is God's answer to man's doubt. Do you have that? Let that echo in your mind, now. Jesus is God's answer to man's doubt.

Now, we all have difficulty with doubt. But what we need is a strong faith. Doubt sees the obstacles; faith sees the way. Doubt sees the darkest night. Faith sees the day. Doubt dreads to take a step; faith soars on high. Doubt questions, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I."

Now, I know that you want faith, and you need faith. You need to possess a faith, but more than that, you need a faith that possesses you. With that in mind, we're in John chapter 4—begin in verse 46: "So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. And when he had heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son, for he—the son—was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down, my child dieth. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And, as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour of when he began to amend—that is, when he began to get better—and they said unto him, Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth, and himself believed and his whole house. This again is the second miracle that Jesus did when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

Now, here was a man who had a problem. And what was his problem? He was a nobleman. That is, he had prestige, he had power, doubtless, he had wealth, he had all of the accoutrements that go with that wealth. But he had a son that was sick. He has a problem that he could not handle. Now, he'd heard about Jesus turning water into wine at Cana of Galilee. And now, Jesus is back in Cana of Galilee. And this man thinks, well, if Jesus could turn water into wine, maybe he could heal my son. And so, he makes the journey from Capernaum to Cana of Galilee. I've made that journey myself many times. It's about 17 to 25 miles. It all depends on where you start, and where you

stop. But here's this nobleman; he makes this journey over to Cana of Galilee where Jesus performed His first miracle. And he desperately pleads with Jesus to heal his son. But rather than healing his son, the Lord seems to remonstrate with him, almost to scold him. Jesus looks at him, and he says, Except ye see signs and wonders, you will not believe."

This man, however, is in desperation. He doesn't want to talk theology. He says, "Lord, come down before my son dies." And the Lord Jesus says, "Go your way; your son is all right. Your son lives." And this man's problem was the dark soil in which the flowers of faith would bloom and blossom.

Three things I want you to see; as we talk about strong faith, and going beyond miracles and on to Jesus, three things I want you to see. First of all, I want you to see the obstacles to strong faith. And then, I want you to see the operation of strong faith. And then, I want you to see the objective of strong faith.

I. The Obstacles to Strong Faith

Now, this man had some obstacles in his life. And, what were they?

A. Second-Handed Faith

Obstacle number one to strong faith: second-handed faith. Now, listen. Write it down, if you're making notes: Second-handed faith. All this man had was hearsay about the Lord Jesus. He had heard how Jesus had done miracles. You can see that very clearly in verse 46: "So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum; when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him. He had just heard about Jesus. And that's wonderful. Everybody ought to hear about Jesus. But all he had was hearsay. All he did was to listen to other people talk about miracles that Jesus had done.

Now, look up here, and let me tell you something. Second-handed faith is not strong faith. You can't go to heaven on your mother's faith. You can't go to heaven on your pastor's faith, your neighbor's faith, or anybody else's faith. You can hear about Jesus, and what Jesus has done for others, but that is not strong faith; that is second-handed faith. Jesus asked those disciples, "Who do men who do men say that I am?" They said who men said that he was. But then, Jesus asked the pertinent question: "But whom say ye that I am?"

Now I want to ask you a question this morning: Do you know about Jesus, or do you know Him? Is your faith first-handed faith or second-handed faith?

B. Sign-Demanding Faith

Now, here's another obstacle to strong faith. Not only second-handed faith, but I want

you to notice he had a sign-demanding faith—a sign-demanding faith. Look again in verse 48: “Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”

Now, Jesus was not approving the man when he said this. Jesus was rebuking the man when he said this. Jesus said, in another place, An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh a sign.” Here were these people saying, “Give us a sign from heaven, and we’ll believe.” Even when Jesus Christ was on the cross, they said, “Come down from the cross, and we’ll believe.” Are you in that category? Are you a person who said, “Well, if God would work a miracle for me—a miracle that I could see, an industrial strength, bona fide miracle—then I would believe, because seeing is believing. No, it is not. Seeing is seeing. And, believing is believing. And so many people have the idea that if God would perform a sign, then it would be all right. But, friend, listen very carefully, as we’re talking about miracles. Miracles are not very good tools for evangelism. Jesus had performed a miracle in John chapter 2. He turned the water into wine. You’re in John chapter 4; just go back to John chapter 2, and look, if you will, in verse 23.

This is incredibly instructive. Look at it: “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover in the feast day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did.” Here they came; here was the entourage. They’re following Jesus. Why? They saw the miracles which he did. But now notice verse 24, and I hope it’s underscored in your Bible. “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them.” The word commit, in verse 24, and the word believe, in verse 23, is the same word in the Greek language. They believed in Him; he did not believe in them.

Now, why didn’t he? Because he knew men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. He knew that these people were following Him, not because he was Messiah, but because of the miracles. It was not God they were hungry for; it was a sign, a miracle. And when Jesus fed 5,000—and we’re going to talk about that later on—the crowds followed Him. They said, “This is wonderful. Look. He’s a walking cafeteria.” But when Jesus began to talk to them about eternal truths, eating His flesh and drinking His blood—that is, receiving Him into their lives—are you listening?—they left Him. They deserted Him. They had seen Him feed 5,000. He had to turn to His disciples, and say, “Will you also go away?” Jesus knew man, and he knew that these miracle mongers, these people who demand signs and miracles, don’t have strong faith. What was wrong with this man’s faith? Well, it was a second-handed faith. Number two, it was a sign-demanding faith.

Now, listen carefully. I’m going to slow down right here. What is wrong with asking for signs and miracles? What is wrong for wanting signs and wonders? You’re going to hear more and more about signs and wonders, as we come to the end of an age. Now,

there's nothing wrong with signs and wonders—Jesus did them. But what is wrong with demanding signs and wonders?

1. It Dishonors God

Number one, it dishonors God. It says God, I can't take you at your word. You've got to prove yourself to me. Suppose you were to say to your son, "Son, I'm going to put a hundred dollars into a bank account for you. I have done that, son, to begin a bank account, so when you get to be sixteen, you can have a car of your own. And so, this is the first installment. I'm putting one hundred dollars in the bank for you." Now, suppose your son were to say to you, "Dad, that is wonderful; but Dad, how can I be sure that you put a hundred dollars in the bank for me?" "Well, I just said so, son." "Well, Dad, thank you very much. Dad, would it be all right if I see the deposit slip? I mean, Dad, could you give me some proof?" Do you see what that is? Do you see the insult? Your word is not enough. I need some proof that you are a God that keeps your word.

Thomas, we call him Thomas, the doubting disciple. The other disciples believed in Jesus and the resurrection. Thomas said, "Except I see the prints in his hands, the wound in his side, I'll not believe." Then, when Thomas did see, and Jesus said, "All right, Thomas, there they are," Thomas fell down on his knees, and rightly he should have. He said, "Lord, I believe; my Lord and my God." But here's what Jesus said to him. And you might want to put this in your margin—John chapter 20, verses 29 through 31: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed."

2. It Is Dangerous to Man

Now, it's very important that you understand this. This man's faith was a weak faith. Number one, it was a second-handed faith. Number two, it was a sign-demanding faith. When you demand signs, not only is it dishonoring to God, but it's dangerous to man. Signs and wonders can be very deceiving. I want you to put over in your margin of your Bible this scripture, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9—2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9—and what you have in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9 is a description of the Antichrist who, I believe, is standing in the wings of world history. There is coming a man who will be a super deceiver. He is the devil's messiah. He is Satan incarnated. He is coming. He will be the last world ruler before the kingdom of heaven is set up. We believe that this man of sin, this beast, this Antichrist may be alive and well on planet earth today. But let me tell you how the apostle Paul describes him. Listen to this, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9: "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." The Antichrist will be a master magician. The Antichrist will have power to do incredible miracles. And by those new age miracles, millions will be doomed and damned to hell, because they

were deceived by signs and wonders of the Antichrist.

Put these verses down—Revelation chapter 13, verses 13 and 14—listen to them. It speaks of the Antichrist, and here is what it says about him: “He doeth great wonders so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them which dwell on the earth by means of those miracles that he had the power to do”—makes fire to come down out of heaven.

Suppose, rather than taking the Word of God for the assurance of your salvation, you went out in an open field one day, and you said, “God, I’ve just got to know—are you real? Can I go to heaven? Am I right with you? Do you exist? Give me a sign. Give me a wonder. Show me.” And then suppose from pole to pole the heavens were to glow with fire. And you would say, “Oh, oh! Oh! That is glorious! O God, thank you for speaking to me. Thank you. And then you die. And stand at the judgment, and the Lord says, “Depart from me ye that work iniquity; I never knew you.” But you said, “Lord, what about the sign?” The devil could point his finger at you, and say, “You fool. You fool. That was me. That was me. I deceived you with fire from heaven.” When you demand signs and wonders and miracles, it is dishonoring to God; it is dangerous to man. And that’s why Jesus remonstrated with this man. And Jesus said, “Except ye see signs and wonders, you’ll not believe.”

C. Self-Centered Faith

But not only was his faith a second-handed faith, not only was it a sign-demanding faith; it was a self-centered faith. Look again, if you will, in verse 49—we’re back to chapter 4: “The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down or my child die.” Now, what’s he interested in? The welfare of his child. Is anything wrong with that? No. Just like there’s nothing wrong with miracles. And I will promise you, if I have a child that’s sick, I’m going to be bombarding heaven in prayer. Nothing wrong with that. But this man has yet to bow at the feet of Jesus Christ and worship Him. So many of us are so concerned about our health, our welfare, our children, our families, our future—all of these things. That’s not strong faith. There’s nothing wrong with asking God to bless us. But strong faith is interested primarily in the glory of God and the heart in its right relationship to Him. This man was interested in the physical, not the spiritual; in the temporal, not the eternal.

D. Strong-Willed Faith

Now, here’s a fourth thing that was wrong with his faith. Remember we said what? It was a second-handed faith. Number two, it was a sign-seeking faith. Number three, it is a self-centered faith. Number four, it is a strong-willed faith. Now, notice what he says in verse 49: “Lord, come down or my child die.” He’s telling God what to do. He is instructing the Lord. But notice verse 50: “Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way.” Now, don’t

miss that. This man says to Jesus, “Come!” Jesus says, “Go.” He’s trying to dictate to the Lord. He’s trying to tell the Lord how he’s going to do what he’s going to do when he does it.

Have you ever been guilty of that? Have you ever been guilty, rather than saying, speak, Lord, thy servant hears, you’re saying, listen, Lord, I’m talking to you. Now, Lord, here’s what you must do. That, friend, is weak faith. Strong faith waits upon God, and listens to God, and gets a message from God. Weak faith is strong will.

Let me tell you what faith is. Faith is not so much receiving from God the things that you want as it is accepting from God the things that he gives. That’s—what’s the word I’m looking for? Bosh—b-o-s-h—bosh. That’s a good Greek word for this bosh about name it and claim it. You can’t claim it till he names it—till he names it.

Faith is not dictating to God. Faith is hearing God, believing God, and acting on what God says. This man is a nobleman. He’s been used to telling people what to do. He has servants here, there. “Lord, come down and heal my son.” The Lord just says, “No, you go. You go.”

So, that’s weak faith. It is second-handed faith. It is sign-seeking faith. It is self-centered faith. It is strong-willed faith. Maybe better than no faith at all, but it’s certainly not strong faith.

II. The Operation of Strong Faith

Now, this man is going to go through a metamorphosis. Something is going to happen to this man, and he is going to have, now, strong faith. And he’s going to go beyond miracles and on to Jesus. Now, what is strong faith? I want you to see the radical dramatic change that takes place. Begin now in verse 49: “The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down or my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word.” Underscore it; put a big star out by it.

A. You Must Hear the Word of God

Get your Bible out now, and look at it. I’m going to tell you, friend, what strong faith is. Strong faith, number one, is this: you must hear the Word. Look in verse 50: “Jesus saith unto him”—you must hear the Word. The Bible says, in Romans 10, verse 14, “How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And, how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And, how shall they hear without a preacher?” And then, in Romans 10, verse 17: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Now, in order for you to have faith, you must know what God has said. Wake up. Listen. In order for you to have faith, you must know what God has said, and is saying, because faith is a response to the Word of God. Jesus said something to him, and he heard the word. Romans 10, verse 17: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the

Word of God.” That’s the reason that we have this pulpit. That’s why we have this church; that’s why we preach: so people can hear the Word of God. Do you understand that? If you want people to believe, you’ve got to give them something to believe. And you must give them the Word of God.

B. You Must Believe the Word of God

So, what’s the first step in faith? Number one, you hear the Word of God. Number two, you must believe the Word of God. Look in verse 50 again. And the Bible says, “And the man believed the word.” Now, hearing is not enough. There are some who will sit before me this morning, and you will hear, but you have not yet believed. You must hear. That’s important. How shall they hear without a preacher? That’s fine. But you must hear, and then, number two, you must believe the Word.

You say, Well, Pastor, that is my problem. I just have trouble believing. I can’t help it if I can’t believe. Oh, yes, you can. Folks, let me tell you something. You don’t have intellectual problems if you don’t believe. You have moral problems. Your problem is not in your head; the problem is in your heart. The Bible says, “Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. It is not that you cannot believe; it may be that you will not believe, because Christ gives faith to every man, and what you must do is accept it, receive it, and believe it. Christ is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. You can believe, if you will believe. Unbelief is not weakness; it is wickedness. It is rebellion. If you want to believe today, God will enable you to believe.

The man heard the Word. Secondly, the man believed the Word. What is faith? Faith is a response to God himself. Not to what God has done, not to miracles. Now remember, this man believed before he saw a thing. Now, he doesn’t see any sign; he doesn’t see any wonder. What does he have? Here is the man. Here is Jesus Christ. This man is looking into the face of Jesus. Jesus says to him, “Go thy way; your son lives.” This man now is captivated by the person, the character, of Jesus Christ himself. No sign, no wonder, but Jesus. Now, listen to me. What is faith? Faith is the heart response of the soul to the character and nature of God. It does not demand signs; it does not demand wonders. It’s so very important that you understand this. You see, God created you; the God who made you, he created you this way. God created my eye that my eye would respond to light. God created my ears that my ears would respond to sound. And God created my spirit that it would respond to the character and the nature of God. Not because of signs and wonders, but because of God himself. Here, the Lord Jesus is speaking to this man, and the man believed the Word.

C. You Must Obey the Word of God

Now, watch it. You must hear the Word of God. Number two, you must believe the Word

of God. And, you can, if you want to. Number three, you must obey the Word of God. Now, look, if you will, in verses 50, and following: “Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And, as he was now going down, his servants met him.” He is doing exactly what Jesus told him to do. Jesus said, go, and now he goes. Now, had he not believed, he would have stayed there still demanding a sign, still posturing, still asking Jesus to do it. But now, it’s settled. Now, faith is shown by obedience. You must hear the Word; you must believe the Word; you must obey the Word. You see, faith is always—true faith—is always linked to obedience. Romans chapter 16 and verse 26—you may put that in your margin; it speaks of the obedience of faith. And James said this, in James 2, verse 26: “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” Faith without works is dead. Sitting in a church, nodding your head, taking notes, is not faith. You must hear the Word; you must believe the Word; you must obey the Word.

Well, you say, Pastor, are you telling me that I’m saved by faith and works? Oh, no. I’m telling you that you’re saved by faith that works—faith that works. If it doesn’t work, it is not faith. Just simply saying that you believe but not obeying is not faith; there’s no substitute for obedience. Faith that does not lead to obedience is not faith at all. So here’s the man who hears the Word, he believes the Word, he obeys the Word. But now, wait a minute—here’s the sweet part. Look, if you will now, in verse 51: “As he was now going down, his servants met him and told him saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend—that is, to get better—and they said unto him”—now, understand this, be careful now—“yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him. And the man knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus saith unto him, Thy son liveth, and himself believed, and his whole house.”

Now, here’s something that’s always been sweet to me. Do you know how much time has taken place between when Jesus said to this man, your son is okay, and this episode when he meets these servants, this entourage coming out to meet him? Twenty-four long hours. Now, this man lived where? In Capernaum. Where did Jesus have the encounter with this man? In Cana. How far was it? Twenty miles. He could have made that on foot seven or eight hours, but he was a nobleman. A nobleman wouldn’t walk this far. He would go by chariot, or by camel, or by some conveyance. But twenty-four long hours have passed. Let me ask you a question. If you left home, and you had a son that was at the point of death, desperation, and somebody said to you, he’s all right, go home, what would you do? You would go as fast as you could back home to see, wouldn’t you? I would. I mean, I’d get back there as quickly as I could to see. Yes, he said, it’s okay, but I’ve got to go check. This man takes twenty-four hours. He could’ve been there in two or three hours. What is this? Folks, this is one of the most incredible demonstrations of faith, I believe, in the Bible.

D. You Must Rest in the Word of God

That brings me to the fourth thing of what real faith is. You must hear the Word of God. You must believe the Word of God. You must obey the Word of God. And then, you rest in the Word of God. You just rest in the Word of God. Do you know what the Bible says? He that believeth will not make hast. You don't have to worry. I mean, you can wait on the Lord. I was reading this morning in the Word of God, in Psalm 37, where the Lord said, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Friend, don't get all upset and go around with nervous frustration. Rest in the Lord. Commit your way to the Lord. Now, why did the Lord do it this way? Why did the Lord say, oh, hey, get ready for a blessing. If this doesn't bless you, you've got calluses on your soul. Now, listen. Why did not Jesus go with that man and heal his son? Why did Jesus just say, you go; your son is healed? Now remember, what did the man have? He had the Word of God. He had the word of Jesus. Now, when I need a blessing, when I need an answer to prayer, do I have to have Jesus here with me physically to get it? No, sir. No, sir. That boy was twenty miles away, and Jesus healed him long distance, didn't He? Sure did.

Now, you know there's a verse in the Bible that says this: He sent his word and healed him. He sent His Word. Jesus is not here in a body today. But we've got this, don't we? We've got this. Friend, this not just a book. This is the Word of God—the Word of God. I mean, what He's saying is, it doesn't matter whether you're here or there, wherever you are, just take my Word. He sent His Word and healed him. And so, when I have this Bible in my study, it's like having Jesus in my study. When I have this Bible in my home, it's like having Jesus in my home. Well, you say, oh, you're worshiping the Bible. I don't mean it that way. I'm saying, though, when I pick up the Word of God and read it, God speaks out of His Word, and faith is finding a promise in the Word of God, brought home by the Spirit of God, and standing on it.

III. The Objective of Strong Faith

Now, here's the last thing, and I have just a couple of minutes to give you the last thing, and I wish I had more. But, we talked about the obstacles of strong faith, and then we talked about the operation of strong faith. Now, let me talk to you about the objective of strong faith. Read the last two verses in this wonderful chapter. Now, the Bible says, "So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth, and himself believed, and his whole house." Now, wait a minute—wait a minute, Adrian. I thought you said he already believed. Look, if you will, in verse 50. The Bible says, "And the man believed." But now you go down to verse 53, and it says, "And himself believed." Well, when did he believe? What is the last verse talking about, or verse 53? Now the man is not believing for physical healing; he's believing for salvation. Now he's believing not in a miracle, but in a Messiah. Now he is gone beyond the

miracle, and he has gone on to Jesus. That's why the miracles were there: that he might go on and believe in the Lord Jesus. I can see him as he goes back home, and he gets out the Old Testament Scriptures, and he says, "Wife, son, family, household, I've met the Messiah. Believe on Him; trust Him. We'll be saved." Well, what good would it have done if this boy had been healed, and then later died and went to hell? Jesus didn't heal everybody. But He'll save everybody who'll call upon Him. He did not come as a teacher, or as a healer; He came as a Savior. The Bible says the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. We'll have to talk more about this later on. But here's the point—here's the point. John said, Jesus did many miracles, but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that, believing, you might have life through his name.

Conclusion

I was visiting in the hospital, and I was praying with a woman. And Joyce said to me, "Adrian,"—she says this from time to time—"Adrian, listen; if you don't want anybody to hear you, don't talk, because," she said, "Adrian, you cannot whisper." And, you know, I said, "Well, I'm just whispering." She said, "They're hearing you all over this restaurant." And so, I was in the hospital. I was not trying to broadcast anything. But I was praying with a woman in one room. But all the way across the hallway I heard somebody say, "Come see me, too." I thought they were calling for a nurse. So I kept on. After a while, they said, "Come see me, too." I said, "Are you talking to me?" She said, "Yes, come see me, too." So I went all the way across the hallway, and there in that hospital bed was a precious lady, her white hair—I can see her now—spread out on that pillow. Pain was on her face. Despair was in her heart. You could tell by the look on her face that she had very little time to live. There was that color of death, that ashen grey. The smell of death was in that room. She said, "I'm not ready to meet God. Mister, can you help me?" I said, "Yes ma'am, I can." And I told her about the Jesus that I'm preaching about this morning. And I said, "Lady, if you'll trust Him, He'll save you." She said, "Would you help me?" I said, "Yes, I will." And I said, "Pray this prayer after me: Dear God..." She said, "Dear God..." "I know that you love me." "I know that you love me." "I know that you want to save me." "I know that you want to save me." "Jesus, thank you for paying for my sin with your blood." "Jesus, thank you for paying for my sin with your blood." "Jesus, I believe God raised you from the dead." "Jesus, I believe God raised you from the dead." "I open my heart." "I open my heart." "I receive you now as my Lord and Savior." "I receive you now as my Lord and Savior." "Thank you for saving me." "Thank you for saving me." "Amen." "Amen."

I opened my eyes. I expected to see peace on her face, but I saw a tortured look on her face. And she said to me, "But I don't see how just saying that can do any good?"

And I said, “Lady, you’re right. You’re right. Just saying that can’t do any good at all. It is believing that, trusting that—that’s what saves you. Now, let’s pray it again, and this time put your faith in Jesus. We prayed it again, and she said, “Lord, I really trust you.” And I saw the peace of God come over that precious woman’s face. I expect to meet her in heaven. I really do.

Friend, that’s what these miracles are about. Believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus. Trust in Jesus. These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing you have life through his name.

Bow your heads in prayer. And, if you’ve never trusted Jesus—you may believe about Him, you may have heard about Him, you may have a second-handed faith, you may have a self-centered faith—but what you need is a saving faith, a strong faith. And, if you want to be saved, would you pray the prayer like I asked that lady to pray: “Dear God, I know that you love me.” Just pray it now. “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, Lord Jesus. I really do. Come into my heart; forgive my sin; save me today, Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus. Hallelujah. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, the next thing you should do is to make it public—if you’re sincere. Now, one of the ways we can know that we’re sincere is that we’ll not be ashamed of Him. So, we’re going to sing, in a moment, an invitational hymn. In a moment, the ministers of this church are going to be standing at the head of each of these aisles. In a moment, a minister will be standing in that aisle way up in the balcony. We’re going to sing this simple little song: “Lord, I believe. Lord, I receive. Lord, I confess you, now.” And just step out and come. You say, Pastor, what would I say when I go down there? You just tell the minister, just say, I am trusting Jesus. If you have questions, we have an open Bible. We want to give you some Scripture to stand on, and we want to seal your decision in prayer. And I can promise you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus Christ will save you forever, eternally, and He will keep you. Others of you—listen—others of you today need a church home. You are already saved, but you need to come forward and say, I want to place my membership here. If you do not have believer’s baptism, as we understand it, we want the joy and the privilege of baptizing you. Do not leave during the invitation, unless it is an emergency. If you’re with a friend who 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. Let’s stand together. You step out and come, right now.

The Power of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 17, 1992

Main Scripture Text: John 4:46–54

“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.”

JOHN 4: 53

Outline

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- I. He Desired a Wonder-Worker
 - A. It Is Dishonoring to God to Desire a Wonder-Worker
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- II. He Discovered a Word-Keeper
- III. He Delighted in a Life-Giver

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to turn now to John chapter 4, please—John chapter 4—and we’re continuing our series, brand-new series, entitled “A Parade of Miracles.” Now John tells us that Jesus did many miracles, but they were not all written in the Gospel of John. But John tells us in John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, that he selected certain miracles, and he put them together by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in a special sequence, *“that [we] might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing [we] might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31) And the word for *miracle* in John is the word *semeion*, which means “a sign with a significance.”

These are not mere miracles. I hate to use the word *mere* when I use the word *miracle* because miracles are astounding things. But they are not mere miracles. They are miracles with a message, signs with a significance. There is a truth beyond just simply the miracle that Jesus did. Now I would not want you for one scintilla of a second to believe that I do not believe that these things actually, literally, physically happened. Jesus performed these miracles, and they are history. They happened. But beyond them there is a greater spiritual significance. They are selected to teach us a tremendous truth. For example, last week, when we saw Jesus turning water into wine, we learned a greater truth, a marvelous truth, of the transforming power of our wonderful, wonderful Savior.

Now today, we're going to learn something of the power of faith. What kind of faith does it take to have our lives transformed? Today we are learning a lesson about faith. Let's read it here from John chapter 4, and begin reading in John chapter 4, verse 46: *"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle"—the second sign with a significance—"that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee."* (John 4:46–54)

What a marvelous lesson on faith we have today: faith that can see the invisible, faith that can believe the incredible, faith that can receive the impossible—a marvelous, marvelous message on faith!

*Doubt sees the obstacles; faith sees the way.
Doubt sees the darkest night; faith sees the day.
Doubt dreads to take a step; faith soars on high.
Doubt questions, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I."*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

And I just pray God that you'll be one who says, "Yes, I believe," because if you believe, you'll have life. You see, Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) And John said, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and believing that you might have life." (John 20:31) Life follows faith like night follows day—life follows faith like night follows day. Now Jesus is come that you might have life, and there's no life without faith. And so we have a marvelous message here, a wonderful lesson on the right kind of faith—on biblical faith.

Now this man had a problem. And it was a deep problem; it was a severe problem. His son was sick, nigh unto death, and he comes to Jesus. And he says, "Please come heal my son; he's about to die." And Jesus seems to remonstrate with him. Jesus seems to scold him, to chide him. And Jesus says, *"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."* (John 4:48) Look at it in verse 48. It seems as though Jesus is

scolding him, chiding him: *“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”* This man didn’t want to argue theology. He had a deep need. And so he seems to acquiesce to what Jesus says, or somehow, it just goes past him, but he says, “Lord, come down ere my child die!” And Jesus says, “Go your way; your son lives.” And the man believed him. (John 4:48–50) And as we’re going to see in a moment, the boy was healed.

Now this man had a need, but it was his need that brought him to Christ. He had a sorrow, but his sorrow was the deep, rich soil in which the flowers of faith could bloom and blossom. You see, God allows us to have trouble. God allows us to have sorrow. Indeed, God has planned it and ordained it. And in the Garden of Eden, after man sinned, and after sin cursed this world, God said to Adam and to Eve, *“Cursed is the ground for thy sake”*—“not for your punishment, Adam, but for your sake, Adam.” *“Thorns...and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.”* (Genesis 3:17–18) And that symbolized all of the sickness and all of the pain and all of the hurt and all of the misunderstanding and all of the agony and all of the pain that we go through in this world. We have it for our sake.

You see, this man was a nobleman. This man had it all, he thought, until he had a sorrow, until he had a problem, until he had a desperation, until he had something he absolutely could not handle. And what good was his nobility? What good was his wealth? What good was his prestige? What good was his power? His son was about to die. And which of us who has a son or daughter would not die for them? This man was crushed, broken, but it was his sorrow that brought him to Jesus. The worst thing that could happen to any nobleman, any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, would be to live in a world cursed by sin and never know trouble, because then we’d never feel our need of Jesus. And so the Lord allowed this problem, and this problem was the thing that brought this man to Jesus and helped him ultimately to find eternal life.

Now I want you to notice three steps of progression in this man as he progressed in his knowledge of Jesus and as he progressed on his pilgrimage of faith. I want you to see how he started, but I want you to see how he ended. First of all, he desired a wonder-worker. Secondly, he discovered a word-keeper. And thirdly, he delighted in a life-giver. Now you’ll understand why I’m using those topics in just a moment.

I. He Desired a Wonder-Worker

First of all, he desired a wonder-worker. Look in verse 48 again—we’ve already referred to it, but I’m going to refer to again—*“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”* (John 4:48) Jesus knew all men, and Jesus knew this man. And Jesus knew that he was a modern, sensate man, a man who lives by the five senses. This was a man who said, “Show me and I’ll believe.” We’ve even sloganized it today to say what? “Seeing is believing.” That’s the way he lived. He was an intellectual,

and so forth. He said, “Yeah, miracles may be possible. I don’t know. Show me one and I’ll believe.” “Seeing is believing.” He lived by what he could see, what he could smell, what he could touch, what he could feel, what he could hear. He was a man who lived in the realm of the five senses, and he demanded some kind of a miracle to confirm his faith. He was what I call a miracle monger.

And Jesus had no real confidence in this kind of a man. As a matter of fact, go back to John the second chapter, if you will, and look at the concluding verses of John the second chapter and look in verse 23: *“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.”* (John 2:23) Jesus performed some miracles, and there was a big entourage, a big crowd now, that was following in His train. They said, “Yes, we believe.” They sound like they are saved, don’t they? They sound like they are Christians, don’t they? But wait a minute. Look in verse 24: *“But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”* (John 2:24–25)

Jesus knew that these were surface believers. Jesus knew that these were those who were hungering after signs and wonders and miracles. But Jesus also knew that He could not depend upon this crowd. Later on, when Jesus fed the five thousand—and there were some who were following Him also because of that miracle—He turned around to this crowd and started to speak to them about eternal truths and verities, about feeding on Himself, about loving Himself, about trusting Himself, about depending upon His Word, and that crowd left Him like rats leaving a sinking ship. He even had to turn to His disciples and say, *“Will ye also go away?”* (John 6:67) He knew men. “He needed not that any should testify what was in man.” (John 2:25) And this man was of the same category. And Jesus looked at him and said, “Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” (John 4:48) This man desired a wonder-worker.

What’s wrong with that? What’s wrong with saying, “God, give me a sign; God, show me a wonder so I can believe”?

A. It Is Dishonoring to God to Desire a Wonder-Worker

Number one: It’s dishonoring to God. It is dishonoring to God because it says, “God, your Word is not enough.”

Suppose I said to my son: “David, I’m going to give you a present. For your birthday I have deposited five hundred dollars in your account in the bank.” And suppose he said, “Well, thank you, Dad. That’s really wonderful. Hey, Dad?” “Yes, Son.” “Ah, could you show me the deposit slip so I’ll know it’s so?” “Well, Son, I just said so.” “Yeah, I know, Dad. Could you give me some sort of a little token? Couldn’t you give me some sort of a little sign, something I can see?” “Well, Son, isn’t my word good enough?”

Do you see what we do when we're asking for signs and miracles? We're saying, in a sense, "Lord, that's fine, but Lord, give me a sign. Give me something I can see because, Lord, I just can't quite take you at your Word." Look, if you will, in John chapter 20. Remember old Thomas was that guy who had that same kind of problem. In John chapter 20—let's turn to it for a moment—look in verse 25: "*The other disciples therefore said unto him*"—that is, to Thomas—"We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:25) He was akin to this nobleman, I believe. And then look in verse 27: "*Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God.*" (John 20:27–28) I'm glad Thomas came along that far, but notice what Jesus said to him: "*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed:*"—and now, ladies and gentlemen, He has a promise for you this morning; are you ready for it?—"blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

He was talking about Adrian Rogers right there. Did you know that? "*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" (John 20:29) He's talking about you right there. Here's a greater blessing for you than there was for Thomas—Thomas, who wanted a sign and a wonder; Thomas, who wanted something physical, sensate, that he could see, taste, touch, feel, hear. Many of us are that way. It's dishonoring to God. Thomas missed a blessing that he should have had.

Go back to John chapter 4, and I want you to see the contrast here. And you know, so many times, if you read a story, you need to read the scripture that comes before that in order to get the whole sense. Look in John chapter 4, verse 39. Jesus was on His way up to Galilee, and He'd just come from Samaria. And in Samaria there had been a revival meeting, and the evangelist was Jesus Christ Himself, and He was preaching. It wasn't a healing meeting. It wasn't a tent meeting where people were getting healed. It was an evangelistic crusade based on the Word of God alone. Jesus was the evangelist. A Samaritan woman was the publicity committee. And look in verse 39: "*And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word;*"—why did they believe on Jesus? Just simply because of what He said—"and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (John 4:39–42) What faith they had—not because of a miracle that was performed. Why did they say they believed on Him? Look

in verse 41: *“And many more believed because of his own word.”* (John 4:41) How they honored him! What a revival meeting they had!

B. It Is Dangerous to Man to Desire a Wonder-Worker

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that these miracle mongers dishonored God: number one. But not only is it dishonoring to God; it is dangerous to man. “Oh,” you say, “you know, if God would just give me a sign, a wonder, a miracle, then I’d believe.” Friend, I want to tell you: that’s dangerous. And I’ll tell you why. The devil, also, is able to give signs, wonders, and miracles. Did you know that? If you don’t know it, you’d better learn it. Look in 2 Thessalonians the second chapter for a moment. We’ve dealt with this passage several times here lately, but we need to look at it. The Bible speaks of the coming man of sin, the Antichrist, and I want you to notice how the Bible describes him in 2 Thessalonians the second chapter and the ninth verse—2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9: *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9) Who? The Antichrist.

In the Book of the Revelation we read of the miracles that the false prophet was able to do to deceive the whole world. We read of evil spirits, which are the spirits of demons that go forth to work miracles. Oh no, my dear friend, if a miracle is all you have—if some vision, some ecstasy, some sign, some miraculous happening is all you have—you may very well be deceived. When you go home—you write this in your margin—you look up 2 Peter chapter 1 and begin in verse 16. And in 2 Peter chapter 1, Peter is telling about being on the Mountain of Transfiguration. He says, “We were there. Man, we saw Jesus. He was transfigured before our eyes.” And Peter goes on to say there—he says, “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. We saw it.” He says, “We heard a voice from heaven: ‘This is my beloved Son.’ ” (2 Peter 1:16–17)

No one here has had an experience like that, I don’t believe; I mean, to see Jesus Christ with your literal eyes—not only to see Him, but to see Him transfigured! Not only was He transfigured, but God spoke from heaven: “This is my Son!” That seems certain, doesn’t it? They heard a voice. But then, one of the most astounding things in all of the Bible, but Peter goes on to say in that chapter: *“But we have...a more sure word of prophecy.”* (2 Peter 1:19) “More sure than what I saw!” He didn’t say he wasn’t sure. He didn’t say he didn’t see it. He didn’t say it wasn’t from heaven. But he said, “More sure than what I saw and what I heard. I was an eyewitness, but we’ve got a more sure word of prophecy.” Hallelujah for the Word, amen? Hallelujah for the Word!

II. He Discovered a Word-Keeper

Here was a man who was a miracle monger. And what’s wrong with that? Number one:

It is dishonoring to God. Number two: It can be dangerous to man. It can be deceiving; it can be deceptive, for Satan himself is able to perform miracles. So just put it down first thing: He desired a wonder-worker, but he discovered a word-keeper.

Now, let's look at this story again. In verse 48, Jesus scolds him. *"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."* Verse 49: The man persists because he has a real need. He's not all that interested in theology; he's got a sick son. So *"the nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth."* (John 4:49–50)

Now, I want you to see one of the greatest transformations in all of the Bible. Don't miss this. If you miss it, you are going to miss a great blessing. Look at it: *"And the man believed the word"*—just underscore that; do you see it?—*"And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."* (John 4:50) Not a wonder, not a sign, not a miracle, not a vision, not an ecstasy, not angels playing ticktacktoe on his ribs, not cold chills running up and down his spine—*"the man believed the word...and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday"*—underscore the word *yesterday*—*"Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house."* (John 4:51–53)

Now I want you to get the scene. I want you to picture it. Here's this man imploring Jesus that He would come down and heal his son. Jesus is at Cana; his son is twenty miles away at Capernaum. He's saying, "You come right now and heal my son." Jesus says, "Go your way; your son lives"—that is, "He's all right; he's been healed. Go your way." The man says, "You say it. Okay, I believe it." And he went his way.

Where did he go? Did he go home? No! He could have gone home. I think I would have gone home; I think you would have gone home. I think most of us would have gone home. I'll tell you, if I had left Steve or David or Gayle or Janice at my house about to die, and Jesus had said to me, "Your son lives," "Your daughter lives," I would have said, "Thank you," and then I would have gone home to see. Wouldn't you? Not this man. He stayed there twenty-four hours, at least, before he ever even started home. It was not that far of a distance. He was a nobleman. I doubt very seriously he was on foot. He could have been there in two hours by chariot; he could have been there in five hours by walking. But the entire day passes. I believe that he met Jesus at seven in the morning—it is the seventh hour. There is a little question here whether John is using Roman time or Hebrew time. I believe he's using Roman time. Some Bibles say it was one o'clock in the afternoon. I believe it was seven in the morning. The Romans started counting at twelve midnight like we do. It makes no difference. The point is that twenty-

four hours had rolled around. What was he doing there in Cana all that time? Shopping? Visiting a friend? Taking in the sights? I don't know! You talk about faith. I mean, he is staying there on nothing but the sheer, naked Word of God—doesn't even go back to check it out! I tell you, what a transformation there was in this man! Relying on the Word and then resting in the Word. It's about time we started doing that.

And you see, why didn't Jesus go? Here is a man who says, "Lord, come down. Do it! Come!" Jesus said, "I'm not coming; you go." "*Go thy way; thy son lives.*" (John 4:50) Why didn't Jesus go with him? You know, so many times, when Jesus would heal someone, he would come and lay His hands on the sick, and they would recover. Why didn't He do that this time?

I think for my sake and for your sake because, you see, there are so many of us who think if only we have the physical presence of Jesus; then we can have the blessings of Jesus. And that's the reason that some poor people are going around saying, "Oh, if I could only have lived back then." Some of you are thinking that: "Oh, if I could only have lived when Jesus was here!" And so they are always looking back. And then there are other poor souls always looking forward: "Won't it be wonderful when Jesus gets here, when He comes again?"

I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, we've got His Word today. And it is just as real and just as powerful as though He were here in His flesh speaking it to you—and just as powerful. And distance makes no difference—distance makes no difference. He is alive and He says, "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matthew 28:20) And don't you let the idea that His glorified humanity is in heaven, somehow, shut you off from the blessing of His powerful Word, for "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17) And whether it be disease or death or distance, it makes no difference! "*The man believed the word.*" (John 4:50) And Jesus knew, one day, that's all I'd have: just the Word. I couldn't say, "Lord, you come to Grove Park Road where I live and do so-and-so." Not in the physical presence, but I've got His Word. And Romans 10, verse 17 says, "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17)

And so here was a man who desired a wonder-worker, but he found something better than a wonder-worker. He found a word-keeper. Jesus said, "*Go thy way; thy son liveth.*" (John 4:50) He went his way; his son did live, for Christ keeps His Word, and "all of the promises of God are yea and amen in the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 1:20) Oh, it's time we learned that!—oh, it's time we learned that!

We're going talk in one of these services here soon about Jesus walking on the water; we preached about that not long ago. We'll have a different message from a different perspective. But I want you to understand that Peter wasn't really walking on the water; he was walking on the Word, for Jesus said, "Do it." That's what we have to

do! We have to learn that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

III. He Delighted in a Life-Giver

All right, now the third thing I want you to see—Number one: He desired a wonder-worker. Number two: He discovered a word-keeper. Number three: He delighted in a life-giver—in a life-giver. You see, Jesus didn’t come primarily to heal noblemen’s sons. Jesus didn’t come to turn water into wine. Jesus didn’t come to walk on water. Jesus didn’t come to feed five thousand. Jesus didn’t come to raise Lazarus from the dead. Why did He come? Luke 19:10: *“The Son of man is”—what?—“come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) The apostle Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world”—to heal the sick. Is that what it says?—“to save sinners”—“to save sinners.”* (1 Timothy 1:15)

You know, today, if we turned Bellevue Baptist Church into a healing crusade, some sort of a miracle-working show, there would be a lot of people who would come who would not ordinarily come. But they are not all that interested in seeing folks saved. They are just like this man; they want to see signs and wonders. *“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”* (John 4:48)

But, you see, Jesus did not come as a sign- and a wonder-worker. That’s not why He came. He came to save lost folks. The angels said, *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall”—what?—“save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21) It is not God’s will to heal everybody. These miracles were real miracles, and they were miracles of love and compassion. But they were there as a significance to something even greater. They were there with a message to show us beyond these. And if this is all you see, you’ve missed what John said! And you missed the reason for them! They are miracles with a message, signs with a significance! Jesus said, in John 10:10: “I’ve come that you might have life”—not existence. (John 10:10) You already have that. Life! You already have existence. Your soul will exist somewhere when the sun, the moon, the stars have grown cold. There will never be time when you won’t exist. There was a time when you were not; there never will be a time when you will not be. Jesus didn’t come that you might have existence. Some people who want to live forever don’t even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. He didn’t come that you have existence. He came that you might have life!

And why did John record these miracles? *“These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31) Remember what I said, that life follows faith like night follows day? Now I want you to keep this in mind when I said, “He delighted in a life-giver.” Look, if you will, in this passage in verse 53: *“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which*

Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth:”—now watch this—“and himself believed, and his whole house.” (John 4:53)

Now wait a minute. I thought he already believed. If I go back to verse 50, it says, *“And the man believed the word.” (John 4:50)* He did. That’s one level of faith. But now here’s the highest level, and here is where he needed to come to all the time. *“And the man believed and his whole house.” (John 4:53)* What does he believe now? He’s not believing now for healing; he’s believing for salvation. He is believing exactly as those Samaritans believed up there earlier in this chapter when they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 42: *“And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” (John 4:42)*

That’s the belief that God wants for you! That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world! And that’s what this man believed—first, he wanted a wonder-worker, and now he sees a word-keeper. And since he sees a word-keeper, now he can meet a life-giver. And he believes, and his house believes, and they are saved! And I confidently expect to meet this man in heaven. Wouldn’t it be a shame if his son got healed, and he went to hell? I mean, wouldn’t it be a shame if that’s all he got, and he died and went to hell? What difference would it make if his son lived fifteen, twenty years more, forty years more, a hundred years more, died and went to hell? See, what difference does it make? What difference does it make, friend, if you ride around in an air-conditioned car and eat vitamin-enriched food and wear fine clothing and sleep on a Beautyrest mattress and live in an air-conditioned house and are buried in a two-thousand-dollar casket in a memorial park as pretty as a garden and rise to face the judgment of a God you do not know? What difference does it make? Jesus did not come as the great healer. He came as the Savior of the world to give us everlasting, eternal life! *“Come that you might have life.” (John 10:10)*

You know, you get an average prayer meeting in an average church. Prayer request, do you know what it is? *“Pray for Aunt Suzie. She loves God so much, but she’s about to die.” “Pray for my uncle Joe: great Christian. I’m just afraid that Uncle Joe is going to die. Please pray for my uncle Joe.”* And if my aunt Suzie gets sick, I want to pray for her. And if my uncle Joe gets sick, I’m going to pray for him. And I’m like you: I want to keep my loved ones as long as I can. And how many prayer meetings do we get in where we say, *“Oh, pray for my neighbor; he’s lost and going to hell.”? “Pray for my daughter, pray for my father, pray for my mother. They are lost without Christ, without God, without hope. Pray for them!”* *We’re more interested in keeping the saints out of heaven than we are the lost out of hell.* That’s right. We’re praying trying to keep the saints out of heaven. *“Lord, don’t let them go to heaven!”* And Jesus is, in John chapter 17, praying they will come to heaven. *“Lord, I pray for them, whom thou hast given me,*

that they may be with me.” (John 17:24) *It’s not a tragedy to die and go to heaven; it’s a tragedy to die and go to hell.* Amen? That’s the tragedy.

And here was a man who moved now beyond just simply a wonder-worker and even a word-keeper to a life-giver. He believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! And believing, he received life! That’s what it’s all about. And he believed just the Word—the Word. That’s the way to be saved: Take God at His Word.

I had a young lady—a beautiful young lady, she may be here this morning—come to my office this past week. She said to me: “Pastor, you talk about the fact of salvation. And you say that you know that you know that you are saved.” She said, “I don’t know that I’m saved. I’m a church member, but I don’t know that I’m saved.” I took the Word of God and went through it very carefully with her. And I said, “Now, young lady, if you will receive Christ and trust Him to save you by faith—not looking for a feeling—you can know that you are saved.” She said, “That’s been my trouble. I’ve been looking for some other confirmation; I’ve been looking for some other feeling. I need to just take Him at His Word.” We got on our knees and prayed. And she prayed after me, received Christ as her personal Savior, got up off her knees, and she had a smile as wide as my office. She had all the feeling she wanted because she stopped looking for it. And she just simply took God at His Word and believed God and went out there with the sweet assurance of her salvation—believing God, taking God at His Word.

I was in the hospital visiting, and I went to see a lady. And I was ministering to her, and I prayed for her—and sometimes my wife says to me, “Adrian, if you don’t want anybody to hear you, don’t try to whisper, because you can’t whisper.” She says, “They hear you twenty miles away”—and I thought I was not talking loudly. I was praying for this lady. When I finished, across the corridor in the hospital, I heard a feeble and a pleading voice say, “Come see me too.” I thought maybe it was someone calling for a nurse, and I didn’t pay attention. And after a while, the voice got louder and said, “Come see me too!” And I said, “Were you talking to me?” “Yes. Come see me too.”

So I left that room, and I went over to the other hospital room. And there in that hospital room was a pitiful sight—a lady with her gray hair spread out on the pillow, her eyes sunken back in her head, her brow knitted with pain and worry. The smell of death was in that room. She said, “Please, pray for me.” I said, “Lady, are you a Christian?” “No, sir.” I said, “Well, let me share the Word of God with you.” I took God’s Word, and I explained to her how to be saved and how to trust in Christ. “Now,” I said, “would you pray this prayer after me?” And she said, “All right.” And I prayed, “Dear God,” and she said, “Dear God.” “I’m a sinner.” “I’m a sinner.” “I’m lost.” “I’m lost.” “I need to be saved.” “I need to be saved.” “I want to be saved.” “I want to be saved.” “I trust you, Jesus.” “I trust you, Jesus.” “Come into my heart.” “Come into my heart.” “Save me, Jesus.” “Save me, Jesus.” We went through it.

When I looked up at her after we prayed, that same look was there. That same pain was there. That same utter despair was there! And she said, “But I don’t see how just saying that can do any good.” And I said, “Lady, you are absolutely correct. Just saying that can’t do one ounce of good.” But I said, “If you’ll trust Jesus, if you’ll mean it, He will save you.” I said, “Now this time, let’s do it again. But don’t just say it; pray it. Out of your heart, call on Him by faith! Dear God.” “Dear God,” she said. “I’m a sinner.” “I’m a sinner.” “Lord, I trust you.” She said, “Lord, I really trust you to save me.” We said, “Amen.” I looked at her face; it was shining like the noonday sun. Jesus was in that room. A few days later she died. I expect to meet her in heaven.

Conclusion

The Word of God: not a feeling, not an ecstasy, not a sign, not a vision, but a gentleman named Jesus who will not lie, who said, *“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37) Amen?

There was a charming young lady: beautiful, talented, the life of the party in London. She was a pianist, a composer, a singer. She had everybody charmed that night because of her beauty, her grace, and her talent. She was playing and singing at the piano. But there was a minister there that night whose name was César Malan. And César Malan approached this young lady whose name was Charlotte Elliot. And he said to her: “My dear, you are graceful and charming and beautiful. But God has impressed me to tell you tonight that without Jesus Christ you are as lost as the worst harlot in London.” She took offense. He said, “Now, don’t take offense.” He said, “I’m not trying to insult you. I’m trying to tell you, Charlotte Elliot, that you need Jesus Christ. You need to be saved.”

She left that glittering party, went up to her room, and tried to sleep. Ten, eleven, twelve, one, two in the morning—no sleep. At two in the morning, she arose and wrote for the first time words that many of us have said many times since that time:

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*
—CHARLOTTE ELLIOT

And Charlotte Elliot was born again. And what she wrote that night is what we are going to sing in just a moment. “Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come to thee.” I come because He bids me come.

That’s what I want you to do today. I want you to give your heart to Jesus Christ, and step out on the Word of God and believe that Jesus Christ said what He meant and meant what He said. Trust Him and *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as*

white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)
“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 16:31)

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Disability

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 22, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 5:1–14

“When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?”

JOHN 5:6

Outline

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- I. You Must Validate Your Weakness
 - A. The Primary Source of Your Weakness
 - B. The Paralyzing Force of Your Weakness
 - C. The Persistent Course of Your Weakness
- II. You Must Activate Your Will
- III. You Must Initiate Your Walk
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Conclusion

Introduction

As you know, we are in a series of messages on the miracles of Christ. The title of the series: “Beyond Miracles and on to Jesus.” And the theme is that you are to believe in miracles, but you are to trust in Jesus. I hope that gets into your heart. Now John, in the Gospel of John, lists seven miracles, and he says these seven miracles are given *“that [you] might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and...believing [that you] might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31) So they are miracles with a meaning, miracles with a message, signs with a significance. When Jesus turned water into wine, that tells us that Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointments. When Jesus healed the nobleman's son who doubted, Jesus is God's answer to man's doubt. Tonight, we're going to see that Jesus is God's answer to man's disability.

One of my friends that I've had in past years was a man named Paul Anderson. Paul Anderson was the strongest man in the world—literally! If you met Paul, you would meet

a man five feet, ten and a half inches tall—not very tall. But he weighed 375 pounds. His neck measured twenty-three and a half inches around. How would you like to buy a shirt for a man like that? He had a twenty-three-and-a-half-inch neck, twenty-two-and-a-half-inch upper arms. His arms were like coconuts. Had a fifty-inch chest, thirty-five-inch thighs. Many of you are not thirty-five inches around the waist. He was thirty-five inches around the thighs, twenty inches around the calves. I often heard Paul give his testimony, and people would ask him, “Were you ever once a ninety-seven-pound weakling?” He said, “Yes, when I was four years old.” Just a big man—he had incredible strength.

Paul Anderson, back in 1955, went to Moscow. He was virtually unheard of. The Russians held all the titles—the major titles—in weightlifting. Paul Anderson there bested them all, and he astounded as he won the world championship in weightlifting. And the Russian announcer said that he was a wonder of nature. Later on, Paul Anderson began to do feats of strength. On an occasion, he lifted 6,270 pounds off the ground with his back—more than three tons! This man lifted that weight with his own body. He’s in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and according to them, that is the greatest weight ever lifted by a human being. He was a stellar athlete and an even more stellar Christian. Paul Anderson recently died. He had kidney failure. He died at sixty-one years of age, and he wound down to the grave—strongest man on earth, but he died. And if Jesus doesn’t come, so are you going to die, no matter how much strength you have.

The Bible says in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 30, “*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.*” (Isaiah 40:30) That’s us, folks. All human strength will utterly, ultimately fail. But the Bible says, “Though our outward man perish, our inward man, the real man, is renewed day by day by the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:16) Our great question, therefore, is not what is going to happen to our bodies, but the great question is this: Do we have that inner strength that God wants us to have? Now this miracle that we’re going to study tonight is going to tell us how to have that kind of strength.

Now I want you to open your Bibles, if you will, to John chapter 5, and I begin reading in verse 1—John chapter 5, verse 1: “*After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,*”—by the way, that means “house of mercy”—“*having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk,*”—that means they had no strength; they were without power. That’s what the word *impotent* means: “without power”—“*of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of*

whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worst thing come unto thee.” (John 5:1–14)

Now, let me give you the background here. As we’ve already said, it takes place at a pool called the Pool of Bethesda. And that literally means that the house of mercy, if you’ve been to Israel, as some of us have, it’s just right inside the sheep gate, where Stephen was stoned. And you go to this place, this pool, it is still there. Actually, it’s about forty feet below street level now where this miracle took place. The Lord Jesus showed His mercy to this poor man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Now it was something like a health spa, and all around on these porches are sick people, some of them with withered limbs, some of them were blind, some of them had maladies that perhaps you may be afflicted with, but only worse. They were there hoping for a miracle. And, yearly, when the water would bubble up, God, in His mercy, would perform a miracle, and whoever stepped into the water would be healed.

Now Jesus came there—it was on the feast day—and Jesus came there, and He went to one particular man. There were many there, but Jesus chose one. This man had been waiting in line for thirty-eight years. At least, he had been sick, paralyzed, an invalid for thirty-eight years. I don’t know how long, really, he had been there at the Pool of Bethesda, but for a long time, waiting in line, trying to inch closer and closer to the water, that he might be in the water—the first in the water—and to be healed. And Jesus asks him a profound but a very simple question: “Do you want to be made whole?”—“*Wilt thou be made whole?*”

That’s a question not only that Jesus was asking that man; that’s a question Jesus is asking you. He’s asking me that same question tonight, because this man is a representative man. Jesus is not merely in the healing business; He only healed one there. The Bible says there was a great multitude there. Had Jesus been a great healer, He would have gone from place to place, from person to person, and healed them all.

But He just healed this one man, because what He is doing here is a miracle with a message. He's teaching a greater spiritual truth. As a matter of fact, after He healed this one man, we're going to learn that Jesus just silently, almost stealthily, slipped away. Had He stayed there, they would have clamored after Him. All of the people would have come to Him to be healed. But He did not come as the great healer; He came as the Savior. And these miracles were given *"that [we] might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and...believing [that we] might have life through his name."* (John 20:31) And so I want you to learn again what I'm saying: that we need to go beyond miracles and on to Jesus; we believe in miracles, but we trust in Jesus.

G. Campbell Morgan was a great preacher and teacher of another year. G. Campbell Morgan said something very significant about the miracles of Jesus. G. Campbell Morgan said that, "Every parable that Jesus taught was a miracle of instruction, and every miracle that Jesus wrought was a parable of instruction." Now he didn't mean that the miracles were not real, but there is a miraculous message in the miracle. The very word for "miracle" here in the Gospel of John is the word *sign*. It means it has a significance. The first four letters in the word *significance* spell *sign*. These are miracles with a message. So Jesus didn't heal everybody that day, but Jesus healed this one man. And Jesus healed this one man to get a message across to all of those of us who feel that we need spiritual strength, because, spiritually, as we are going to see in a moment, by nature, we are paralyzed and without strength. In Christ, we have power for living. Jesus is God's answer to man's spiritual disability.

Now, let me give you an example that will prove how this miracle is working. The physical healing is only temporary; it's not really all that important. You think it's important that you get healed. I think it's important, when I get sick, that I get healed. But God probably doesn't think it's nearly as important as we think, because He has a greater plan for us, and a different plan for us. Do you remember—and this is not the same story that we're studying now, but in another place in the Gospels—there was a man who was brought to Jesus by four men carrying him on a stretcher? Do you remember that? Remember that story? The four men brought this man to Jesus, and they let him down through the roof. You remember that story? All right. And Jesus said to this man, "Son, your sins be forgiven." (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5) Now, when Jesus said that, people began to murmur and complain and criticize. They said, in effect, "Just who does He think He is? Who is He to say to that man that his sin is forgiven? Only God can forgive sin"—they were right about that. "Who does He think He is?"

And then Jesus said, "That you may know that the Son of man has power to forgive sins, sir, take up your bed and walk." (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10–11) Jesus healed him physically only to give a credibility to the spiritual miracle. Jesus did something that they could see, so that they might understand and believe that which they could not see. Do

you understand the importance? The important thing to Jesus that day was not healing that man's body; the important thing was forgiving his sin. The healing of the body only attested to the greater unseen spiritual miracle—and so it is with this man. And so we're going to learn three things tonight that will help us to have powerful living; that will help us to understand in the spiritual realm that Jesus Christ is God's answer for man's disability.

I. You Must Validate Your Weakness

Here's the first thing you must do if you would find the strength this man found so long ago. The first thing you must do is to validate your weakness—admit that you're weak. Now, look, if you will, in verse 5: *“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.”* (John 5:5) This man really represents you and me without the Lord Jesus Christ. But, you see, the problem with many of us is we will not admit that we are spiritually paralyzed; we will not validate our own weakness. But let me give you a scripture to put in the margin. It's Romans chapter 5 and verse 6—listen to it. The Bible says, *“For when we were yet without strength...Christ died for the ungodly.”* (Romans 5:6) The Bible describes every man without Christ as being without strength. He's just like this impotent man. That's what the word *impotent* means. He was without strength, and therefore he becomes an illustration of every man, woman, boy, and girl without the Lord Jesus.

A. The Primary Source of Your Weakness

Now, think with me, as we're talking about validating your weakness, think about the primary source of your weakness. Where does your weakness come from? Well, go to verse 14. What was this man's problem? *“Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”* (John 5:14) The primary source of this man's weakness was his sin. Now not everybody is sick because of sin, but this man was. And I think that's the reason that Jesus picked this man out: This man's sin and this man's weakness had a direct connection. And so after Jesus healed him, Jesus said, “Now, don't sin again, lest something worse happen to you.” The point is this: that the primary source of our weakness is sin. We are sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, and sinners by practice. The Bible says, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)

B. The Paralyzing Force of Your Weakness

But now, here's something else I want you to see: Not only the primary source of your weakness, but I want you to see the paralyzing force of your weakness. Many of us do not realize that spiritually we are paralyzed. You may say, “Well, I'm not weak. I lift

weights. I'm very strong." I'm not talking about physical weakness. You may say, "Well, I'm not weak. I have a Ph.D." I'm not talking about intellectual weakness. You may say, "I'm not weak. I have a million dollars in the bank." I'm not talking about financial weakness. I'm talking about spiritual weakness that has paralyzed you.

Now, notice the text that I gave you a little bit ago in Romans chapter 5 and verse 6. The Bible says, *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."* (Romans 5:6) Do you know what our weakness is? Our weakness is that we don't have the strength to be godly. We are without strength. So Christ died for the ungodly. You see what I need in my life? What is God's plan for me? What is God's plan for you? God's plan for all of us is that we be godly—that we be godly. We don't have the strength to be godly. I don't care how hard you try to be godly, you don't have what it takes to be godly. We are without strength when it comes to being godly. You see, you may be strong to do as you want, but you're not strong to do as you ought. *"While we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly."*

C. The Persistent Course of Your Weakness

The primary source of our weakness is sin. The paralyzing force of our sin is that we cannot be what God would have us to be. And now I want you to notice also the persistent course of your weakness. According to verses 5 and 6, this man had been this way for thirty-eight years. Can you imagine being paralyzed, impotent, debilitated, without strength for thirty-eight years? What happens to a man when he's paralyzed for thirty-eight years? His muscles begin to atrophy and to wither. Every year that this man was there, he was not getting better; he was getting worse. His muscle tissue was disintegrating; and so it is with a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl without Christ: The longer they live, the worse their condition. That's a reason that no man should put off giving his or her heart to Jesus Christ. If you need to be saved, you ought to be saved tonight, because tomorrow you'll only have more sin to repent of, and less time to repent in.

You see, the primary force of his weakness was sin. And the paralyzing force is that he cannot be godly. And the persistent course is that it goes on and on and on, but down and down and down. Now, if you would have what this man had, what you must do is validate your weakness. You must say, "God, you're right—you're right. I am without strength. I'll lay my pride in the dust, and I will admit my need."

II. You Must Activate Your Will

Now, here's the second thing: Not only must you validate your weakness, but you must activate your will. Look in verse 6—look at it: *"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?"*

(John 5:6) In modern English, “Will you be made whole? Do you wish to be made whole? What is your will in this matter?” Now, let me say to each of us that we must activate our own will. God will never coerce your will. God will enable your will, but God will not coerce your will. If God were to coerce your will, if your relationship with Him is forced, then you’re no longer a man, you’re a machine. And God can have no fellowship with a machine. If you want to come to Christ, you may. But if you don’t want to come to Christ, He’ll not force you. The Bible says, “Whosoever will may come.” (Revelation 22:17)

When I have finished speaking tonight, I’m going to give a public invitation, and if you’ve not yet given your heart to Jesus Christ, I’m going to invite you to come and be made whole. But if you don’t want to come, there are not enough angels in heaven that God would allow one of them to drag you down this aisle. But if you want to come, there are not enough demons in hell—or out of hell, or wherever they may be—to keep you from coming. God has given you a will, and our Lord says to you, “Will you be made whole?”

Now some theologians react about this matter of human beings having a will. They think that when you talk about the free will of man, somehow you negate the sovereignty of God. But both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man are taught in the Scripture. And Jesus spoke to this man, and Jesus said, “Will you be made whole?” The fact that God respects human will does not negate or denigrate the sovereignty of God at all.

And sometimes people build artificial arguments that ought not to be built. There’s an old story about some preachers who were having a discussion over theology. There was a room full of them. They got into a heated argument over the free will of man and the sovereignty of God. And there were some who were hyper-Calvinistic, and they said, “Nobody can choose God. God chooses them, and man doesn’t have a will about this thing. God, from eternity, has predestined some for hell and some for heaven, and God is just sovereign over the whole matter.” There were others who said, “No. Now, wait a minute. The Bible says that ‘whosoever will may come,’ and *‘the Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.’* (2 Peter 3:9)

And there got to be a heated argument. And after a while, they separated into little holy huddles. Over here on this side were those who stood up for what they called “the sovereignty of God,” and over here on this side there were those who stood up for what they call “the free will of man.” There was one preacher caught in the middle. He said, “Well, these fellows, when they talk, they sound so right. But when these fellows talk, they sound so right, also.” So he didn’t know which side to go to, so he said, “Well, I think I’ll go to this side over here where these people who talk so much about the sovereignty of God, where they’re having their little holy huddle.” They saw him coming,

and they said, “Why did you come over here?” “Well,” he said, “I just wanted to. I came of my own free will.” They said, “You don’t belong in this group. You go over there.” So he went over here, and they said to him, “Why are you coming over here?” “Well,” he said, “they sent me over here.” They said, “You can’t come over here unless you come of your own free will.” Those are the kind of silly arguments that people get into.

I want to tell you, dear friend, that God never made any man to go to hell—God never made any man to go to hell. “*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9) And “*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” (Romans 10:13) And “*whosoever will may come.*”

Surely, God is sovereign. God is sovereign enough to give a man a will without losing His own sovereignty. That’s how sovereign God is. God is a sovereign God. I heard about a little boy one time who was ten years old. He heard a preacher preach, and that preacher said, “God created some people to be damned and to go to hell, and God created some people to be saved and go to heaven.” That little boy was ten years old and said this: “If God created me to go to hell, I want to go to hell, because anything that does what God created it to do is happy.” You think about that. Hell would cease to exist if God created us for hell. And hell for us—hell as we know it—and the flames of hell would turn to the flames of glory, because we’d be right in the center of the will of God. Friend, listen. If you go to hell, you’ll be an intruder. Hell was “*prepared for the devil and his angels.*” (Matthew 25:41)

And the Lord says, “Will you be made whole?” That’s the question He asks. Now, that’s an interesting question, because why would you say to a sick man, “Will you be made whole?” The answer seems obvious. The question seems superfluous. But our Lord is teaching us a lesson here: that He will not force Himself upon any individual, but “*whosoever will may come.*”

Now this man could never have said yes to Jesus except Jesus had given the initiative. “*We love him, because he first loved us.*” (1 John 4:19) He will not force our will, but He always enables our will. And we could never choose Him if He had not first chosen us. Thank God for that. But, friend, the question is there: “Will you be made whole?” Now Jesus didn’t say, “Do you want to walk again?” But He used a word that encapsulates fullness, wholeness, wholesomeness. Many people want the result of sin erased, but they don’t want to be made whole. They don’t want to truly, really be a full person as God intended for them to be. But what must you do if you were to have a purpose for living? You must validate your weakness. You must activate your will. You must say, “Yes, Lord, I want you.”

One of the strangest stories that was ever told is a true story. It happened many years ago, in 1829. George Wilson was sentenced in the state of Pennsylvania to be hanged for mail robbery and murder. But President Andrew Jackson, for whatever

reason I know not, pardoned George Wilson, and said, “He is not to be hanged; he is not to be put to death.” They took that pardon to the governor of the state, and then they took that pardon from the governor on to the warden of the penitentiary where George Wilson was incarcerated. And, finally, they delivered it to George Wilson, and said, “The President of the United States has pardoned you. You will not hang.”

George Wilson said, “I refuse the pardon. I will not accept the pardon. I want to be hanged.” They didn’t know what to do. I mean, here we’ve got a pardon, but now the prisoner will not accept the pardon. What do you do with a man who’s been pardoned, supposed to be hanged by the neck until dead, and the man will not accept the pardon? What do you do? Just take him to the door and shove him out of the prison anyway? They didn’t know what to do. They debated it back and forth. It ended up in the Supreme Court of the United States of America.

And the Supreme Court met and studied the matter. And this is what they decided—Chief Justice John Marshall said this—and I quote: “A pardon is a piece of paper, the value of which depends on its acceptance by the person implicated. If it is refused, it is no pardon.” As a result, George Wilson was hung by the neck until dead, even though a pardon had been offered. And you can sit in this auditorium tonight, die, and go to hell, when Jesus stretches out His arms and says, “Will you be made whole?” That pardon is no good if it is not validated by you, if you will refuse it.

III. You Must Initiate Your Walk

So, what must you do? You must validate your weakness. You must activate your will. Now, here’s the third thing: You must initiate your walk—you must initiate your walk. Now, look, if you will, in verses 7 to 9: *“The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.”* (John 5:7–9) Initiate your walk.

Now, remember that the purpose of this miracle is to teach a greater spiritual miracle: not that Jesus can heal a paralyzed man, but that Jesus can save a soul and give you spiritual power to be godly. Let me give you again the verse that teaches that—John 20:30 and 31: *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:30–31) John did not write the Gospel of John that paralyzed people might be healed; he wrote the Gospel of John that lost people might be saved—not that we would receive physical strength like Paul Anderson had, but that we would receive supernatural strength from above, that believing in Jesus, we can walk in vitality, liberty,

and victory day by day.

Now Jesus said to this man, *“Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk.”* Keep that in mind, because you must initiate your walk. If you were to go to all of the Bible for the most crystal-clear verses that teach salvation, you would have to go to Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10, isn't that true? *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God...lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Those are three marvelous verses, and they're built around three prepositions: *by*, *through*, and *unto*. Now, listen very carefully. I want you to take this verse in just moment, and we are going to apply it to what Jesus said when He said, *“Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk.”*

A. **By Grace**

First of all, how was this man delivered? By grace. There was nothing he could do—he's paralyzed. The Bible says, *“Immediately [he] was made whole.”* (John 5:9) Salvation is by the sheer grace of God—by the sheer grace of God. It is by grace. Had you and I been standing there and heard the Lord Jesus Christ say this to this man, *“Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk,”* (John 5:8) we might have said, “It's not right to taunt him that way; it's not right to torment him that way. How can you tell a paralyzed man to get up? If he could get up, he would have gotten up a long time ago. So, why do you tell him to do that? That's impossible, and because it's impossible, it's unreasonable. And because it's impossible, and unreasonable, it's unfair.” But while we're talking, the man is standing up.

Now, let me tell you what Christianity is: Christianity is the impossible, the unreasonable, and Jesus Christ. I mean, Jesus does the impossible; He does the unreasonable, but it's possible with Him. *“With [Him] all things are possible.”* (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27) He says to a paralyzed man, “Rise,” and that's what He says to every sinner: “I will save you supernaturally; I will transform you.”

B. **Through Faith**

It is by grace, but it's through faith. He says, *“Take up [your] bed.”* (John 5:8) Now, why would that man take up his bed? He'd been waiting in line year after year after year. Our Lord says, “Take it up. Get it out of here. You don't need it any more.” Now it wasn't a four-poster bed like you sleep in; it was a pallet, a soft blanket, that he slept on. “Take it up. Get it out of here.”

Suppose you wanted to see the NBA playoff games and you wanted to get a ticket. Now, let's suppose they had a certain number of tickets and you're standing in line. Let's suppose you've been there now for a day and a half. You've got your thermos bottle and your sandwiches and your little sleeping bag, and you're in line waiting and

waiting and waiting to get a playoff ticket. You're just waiting in line. And then, suppose a buddy says to you, "Hey! Hey! Man, I've got two tickets right down front—best tickets available. I got 'em. Come on, let's go!" Now, would you get out of line? Yes, if you believed him—yes, if you believed him. Now, if you didn't believe him, you say, "After waiting in this line this much, I'm not going to get out of this line." You see, Jesus says, "It is by grace, but it's through faith. You just obey me. You just trust me." And here's a man who is putting his faith into action. Remember what we told you—that *faith is belief with legs on it?*

C. Unto Good Works

Now so, it is "by grace...through faith...unto good works." (Ephesians 2:8–10) Jesus says, "Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk." (John 5:8) And the Greek verb literally is not talking about punctiliar action, where you just take a step. It means "walk, and just keep on walking."

Now, was this man healed because he walked, or did he walk because he was healed? He walks because he's healed. You're not saved by doing good works; you're saved unto good works. It is "by grace...through faith...unto good works." You live the Christian life not in order to be saved, but because you're saved. I don't want to insult your intelligence; but Jesus did not say to this man, "Walk, take up your bed, and rise." He couldn't walk until he was up, and you cannot live the Christian life until after you receive the Christian life. The Bible says, "As you've received the Lord Jesus, so walk in him." (Colossians 2:6) And if you'll understand that you're saved by grace through faith unto good works, you will receive the strength to live supernaturally. Your body will get sick and die, "but though your outward man perish, your inward man will be renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Jesus did not come as the great healer; He came as a great teacher. And listen to me again: You need to go beyond miracles and on to Jesus. Believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus. Jesus did many miracles, "but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31)

Conclusion

I'm going to read you a letter, and I'm finished. But it's a wonderful letter. It's written by a man—I'll give you his name in a moment. But this is what he wrote, I believe, to his daughter. It's entitled "Why I Follow Christ." He said:

"I'm not seeing clear statistical evidence that fewer Christians die of cancer than nonbelievers, or that they are immune in greater degree from the diseases that afflict the human race. Some of the kindest, most selfless persons I know have had more than

their share of bad health. The fact that they belong to Jesus Christ did not insulate them from disease. Therefore I will not follow Christ for promised healing. I will not dispute the restoration of health. I will rejoice at every recovery from what seems to be hopeless, threatened death. I will not hesitate to pray for recovered health for my loved ones and acquaintances. I will set not limits on what God may do, but I will not follow Christ for promised healing.

“I see no sign that Christians escape disaster and accident more than others. I have helped dear friends empty muddy waters out of dresser drawers and new appliances after a disastrous flood. I remember as a child taking clothes to a widow with five children whose house had burned to the ground. A bullet makes no detour around the body of a believer. Therefore I will not follow Christ for any promised protection from disaster. I will not scoff at amazing survivals nor deny that providence has and continues to work for the good of God’s own. I will continue to pray for protection from wicked men and tragedy, but I will not follow Christ for promised protection from accident of catastrophe.

“I do not observe that Christians are specially favored with prosperity. Like James, we’ve all seen the rich oppressing the poor, and justice is rarely perfect in this world. The psalmist has said that he’s *‘not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.’* (Psalm 37:25) And in the deepest needs of this life, that is certainly true. But all of us have known people of integrity who have not prospered. Therefore I will not follow Christ for promised freedom from physical want or the hope of affluence.

“I am not certain that Christians have stronger personalities or fewer neuroses than nonbelievers. I do know that there is no bitterness like religious bitterness and no arrogance more insufferable. I’ve watched Christians suffer emotional and mental disabilities. And, though it may seem heretical, I’m not sure that I would really enjoy living in the same house with either the Apostle Peter or Paul. God wills that the mind of Christ be formed in us. (Philippians 2:5) And there’s not doubt in my mind that the Christian’s attitudes and actions will be improved by his Christianity, but I will not follow Christ for any promise of personality enhancement or perfection.

“Why, then, follow Christ? Why be a disciple of Jesus when life may become more complicated as He so often warned? For one reason alone: In Jesus we behold the face of God. He is the truth—the everlasting truth—God in the flesh. I know that in His life, death, and resurrection, I am reconciled to God, the giver of life. I believe that nothing can separate me from the love of God. (Romans 8:39) He has all power and goodness. I trust Him in His promises. To Him I offer my life, damaged or whole, brief or full of years—it matters not. He is the one certain thing in an uncertain world. He is to be worshiped not so something will happen to me or to the world—something already has happened to me and the world—but because He is God, who through Christ has

reconciled the world to Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:18) He saves me. He is my justification. He is the center that holds. To worship the God of our salvation, to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, that alone is our vocation. We offer our lives to God not so as to be healthy, wealthy, or wise; not even so as to gain strength to do great things for Him; we offer our lives to Him because He alone has a claim on us. God is not a means.”

That’s signed by John C. Hutchison, Jr., written in 1981. It’s one of the greatest things I’ve ever read. This man says, “Why do I follow Christ? Not so that He can perform some miracles for me, but because He is the Son of God, who reconciles us to Himself.”

Now, folks, in this day of New Age mysticism, and flimflammers, and hocus-pocus religions, charlatans, and happiness boys on television, I’m going to tell you something: You’d better get a lock on Jesus Christ. Go beyond miracles and on to Jesus. Believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus.

Whosoever Will

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 24, 1982

Main Scripture Text: John 5:1–14, 24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

JOHN 5:24

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Conclusion

Introduction

All right. It's a joy to see you and have this fellowship in the Word of God. And today, we're continuing our series on a "Parade of Miracles." You know, the Gospel of John is a parade of miracles. John said at the close of the Gospel of John that if everything that Jesus Christ did were put into books, the whole world couldn't contain them. (John 21:25) But John says that he took some specific miracles... And there's a very special word for *miracle* that John uses—the word *semeion*, which means "a sign"; that is, "a miracle with a message," "a sign with a significance." John selected seven miracles, and he used them, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and then, that when we believe that, we would have life through His name." (John 20:31) For Jesus said in this Gospel of John, in John chapter 10, verse 10: "[I've] come that [you] might have life." (John 10:10)

Now, I don't know everything about all of you, but I know this about each of you: you're looking for life. That's what you want: life, a full life, a meaningful life, a fulfilling life, a life that is worthwhile. You're on a search for life. **I heard about a lady who was**

looking in her purse for her keys. At first she looked casually, and then she looked seriously, and then she looked very seriously, and then she looked frantically, because her keys were not there. And then, do you know what she discovered? She was looking in the wrong purse. Now, a lot of you are looking for life—some casually, some of you seriously, some of you frantically—but unless you look in the right place, no matter how much you search, you'll not find it. Life is in Christ. The Bible says, *"In him was life; and [that] life was the light of men."* (John 1:4) Only Christ can light up your life—only Christ. That light is life. And, Jesus said, *"[I've] come that [you] might have life,"* (John 10:10) not existence. You've already got that. You're already breathing. Your heart is already beating. You have consciousness, but Christ came to give you life. Now, that's what these miracles are telling us about. That's what the parade of miracles is all about.

Now we come to the third miracle. We've already talked about Jesus turning water into wine—that was the first one. We've already talked about the healing of the nobleman's son—that was the second one. And, now we're going to be talking about the third one, all right. So, would you turn with me, please, to John chapter 5—John chapter 5? You got that? Let's begin reading in verse 1: *"After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda"—*incidentally, do you know what *Bethesda* means? "House of mercy." Here's a miracle of mercy that's going to be performed at the house of mercy, this place called *Bethesda*—*"having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk"—*the word *impotent* means "without strength"—*"of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first...stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?"*—that almost sounds like an inane question; it almost sounds like a dumb question, though Jesus never asked a dumb question. Here's a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years, trying to get well, and Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be made well? Would you be made whole?" We're going to see the significance of that message, that question, in just a moment—*"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."* (John 5:1–9)

Now, I want us to learn something from this wonderful miracle, because it has a lot to do with you and all of us who are looking for life—real life, fullness of life—that's found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, our outline this morning is extremely simple. I

want you to see this man and his desperation. Then, I want you to see this man in his decision. Then, I want you to see this man in his deliverance. Now, we can all remember that, can't we?

I. His Desperation

Look at this man in his desperation, this man who was lying there in this place. Some feel that, at one time, it was a health spa. Those of us who've visited the Holy Land have been many times to this spot, because the remains of it are still there, this place of Bethesda, this place of the five porches. And, we've seen this spot where this man lay. There they were, all of them moaning, and groaning, and sighing, and dying, and crying—a great multitude with all manner of diseases, like a huge hospital. And, the Lord Jesus Christ comes there, and here's this man lying there. Jesus goes right to him. He singles him out because he's a very special case, and he's going to be used for a very special lesson. Jesus asks him this question: "Do you want to be made whole?" (John 5:6) Again, I say, sounds like a stupid question, doesn't it? But oh, the man did so much want to be made whole. And Jesus, by a miracle of mercy, in the house of mercy, healed him and set him free. But, why this man?

Notice his desperation. I want you to notice that he was an impotent man. That means that he was a man with complete inability—with complete disability. He was in a desperate situation.

A. The Source of His Desperation

Now, what was the source of his desperation? Well, I didn't read on down to verse 14, but if you read on down to verse 14, when Jesus met this man after he had been healed, Jesus said, "Now look, go your way and sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to you." (John 5:14) The source of his desperation was his sin. All of the trouble that any of us have is really because of sin. Somewhere, somehow that's the source of it, friend. "Life is short; death is sure. / Sin, the curse; Christ, the cure" (author unknown). Sin is the problem with this world. I mean, you just put it in boxcar letters over the problems of this world—it is sin. Now, in the university, they'll not tell you that. In the U.N., they'll not tell you that. In the halls of Congress, they'll not tell you that. But, the problem, sir, ladies and gentlemen, the source of it is sin—sin.

B. The Force of His Desperation

But, I want you to notice not only the source of it; I want you to notice the force of it. Here was a man who was paralyzed. He was unable to do what he needed to do, what he ought to do, what he was created to do, which reminds me of Romans chapter 5 and verse 6: the Bible says, "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the [unjust].*" (Romans 5:6) This man had no strength, and it pictures every man,

every woman, every boy, every girl outside of Christ.

You say, “Not me. I’m not a Christian, but I’ve got plenty of strength. I lift weights.” We’re not talking about physical strength. “Oh,” you say, “I’ve got plenty of strength. I’m a Ph.D.” We’re not talking about intellectual strength. You say, “Well, I’ve got plenty of strength. I’m a businessman.” We’re not talking about financial strength. We’re talking about the same kind of strength that Paul was talking about when he said that “*God [commended] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners*”—“when we were without strength,” rather—“*Christ died for [the ungodly].*” (Romans 5:8) You see, you don’t have strength to be godly; that’s the strength you need—strength to be godly. “*When we were yet without strength...Christ died for the ungodly.*” (Romans 5:6) Why? Because we ought to be godly. You see, the unsaved man is able to do what he wants, but he’s not able to do what he ought. Christ gives us the power to do what we ought. That’s the strength we need to do godly.

C. The Course of His Desperation

And so, notice this man’s disability: the source of it—his sin; the force of it—it drained him of his strength; the course of it—he’d been this way for thirty-eight years. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, here he was. Every day he was none the better but a little worse—again, a picture of the man without Christ. Here’s a man in his disability, and, therefore, he pictures every man apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. His Decision

But, the second thing I want you to notice now: not only his disability as is depicted in verse 5, but I want you to see his decision depicted in verse 6: “*When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?*” (John 5:6) Again, I want to tell you, it really does sound like a silly question; it really does sound like an inane question to ask a man who is sick if he wants to be made whole. But, I want you to know that Jesus did that because Jesus respected his will, just as the Lord Jesus respects your will and every human will. If God were to transgress your will, if God were to force you to do something you do not want to do, then, my dear friend, you would no longer be a human being; you would become a machine. So, God gave you a will; and God will not force that will, and Satan cannot force that will.

In a moment, I’m going to give you an invitation to come and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. But, because you have a will, there are not enough angels in heaven to drag you down this aisle and not enough demons in hell to keep you from coming, amen? Not enough angels or demons, because, you see, God will not

force your will, and Satan cannot force your will. And, the question to you today is, “whosoever will may come.”

Now, you know, there are some people today who don’t like this idea that man has a free will. Oh, they get incensed about that. Some theologians, when you talk about the free will of man, they somehow think that transgresses the sovereign power of God. And, theologians and preachers argue about it. Oh, boy! Sometimes the fur flies when the preachers get together and talk about the sovereign grace of God and the free will of man.

I heard about a preacher’s meeting one time—they got into such an argument and such a fury all over it. These theologians found that half of them had their little holy huddle on this side of the room, and the other half had their little holy huddle on that side of the room. Over here on this side were the men who believed in the sovereign grace of God and that God just predestines certain people to be saved and they don’t really have much to do about it. And, over here on the other side are those who believed in the free will—that anybody who wanted to come could come. One poor preacher was caught in the middle. He didn’t know which group he belonged in. They both kind of sounded good to him, and it sounded like there was truth in both areas. But finally, he decided he had to be in one group, so he went over to this group. And, they looked at him, and they said, “Who told you to come over here?” “Well,” he said, “I came of my own free will.” And, they said, “You can’t come of your own free will. You belong in that other group.” So, he went over to that other group, and they said, “Who told you to come over here? Why’d you come over here?” He said, “Because I was sent over here.” They said, “Look, you can’t be in this group unless you come of your own free will.” And so, he was left in the middle.

The truth of the matter is, dear friend, how silly we are to make things seem to contradict themselves that do not. Of course, God is sovereign. The Lord Jesus was sovereign. But, the Lord Jesus Christ came to this man, and He said, “Do you want to be made whole?” (John 5:6) He respected his will, and God will respect yours. God never made a man to go to hell—never, never! I believe it’s blasphemous to teach so.

One preacher, when he was a little boy—and this man grew up to be a great minister—said when he was about a ten-year-old boy, he heard a preacher—who was what we call a “hyper-Calvinistic type”—say that “God created some people for hell and God created some people for heaven. And, if you were created for hell, you were going to hell.” And, that youngster said, “If God created me to go to hell, then I want to go to hell.” Think about it: “If God created me to go to hell, then I want to go to hell, for anything that does what God created it to do is happy.” That is true. And, dear friend, if God created some people for hell, then hell as we know it would be an impossibility, because the flames of torment would become flames of grace and glory if God made us

for it and it for us. The truth of the matter is that God never created you for hell. And, if you go to hell, you will be an intruder. Hell was made for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41) And, the Bible tells us, *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9)

God loves you, and He wants you to be saved, but He will not force you. He respects your will. And, Jesus asks this man who is sick, *“Wilt thou be made whole?”* (John 5:6) And, Jesus is asking you today, “Do you want to be saved?” And, you say, “It’s strange that you would ask a man, ‘Do you want to be made whole?’” Go up here to one of these hospitals and ask one of these sick people, “Do you want to be made well?” They’ll look at you maybe like you’re crazy—but not every one of them. Did you know there are some people who enjoy poor health? I mean, if they were made whole, they wouldn’t have anything to complain about. They enjoy poor health. Now, it’s strange, but I’ve honestly met some who seem to enjoy poor health—not everyone. You say, “That’s strange that a person would have an opportunity to be healed and say, ‘No, I don’t want to be healed.’” Well, if you think that’s strange, what about a person who has an opportunity to be saved and refuses to be saved? What about a person, when you invite that person to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, “Do you want to be saved? Do you want your sins forgiven? Do you want peace, and purpose, and joy, and happiness, and fulfillment, and a reason for living, and a hope in dying? Do you want that?”—“I don’t know. Let me think about it here for a while”? You talk about human depravity! How depraved the human heart is that you have to beg a lost man to be saved. **It’s like begging a starving man to eat at a banquet.**

I mean, here Jesus comes to this man who’s been sick for thirty-eight years and asks him this question: “Do you want to be made whole?” (John 5:6) But, remember now, He’s doing that to teach us an even greater lesson about salvation, because this is a sign with a significance. And so, you see here the decision that this man made. He decided yes, he wanted to be made whole. Who wouldn’t empty the dirt out of his pockets and let God fill them with diamonds? Oh, dear friend, listen: you ought to say, “Yes, I want to be saved. Of course I do.”

“Well,” you say, “but what do I have to give up?” Well, you have to give up everything that will hurt you. That’s what you have to give up. “Do you want to be healed?” “Yeah, but I hate to give up my cancer.” Wouldn’t that be dumb? “Do you want to be saved?” “Yeah, but I hate to give up that stuff.” Listen, my friend, *“the LORD thy God is a sun and [a] shield...[and] no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalm 84:11) If it’ll make you healthy, happy, holy, God says, “Help yourself.” He *“giveth us...all things [richly] to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17) He is a life-giver. Jesus Christ never walked up to any man and said, “Do you want to be made sick?” I’m not inviting you to a funeral; I’m inviting you to a feast. I’m not inviting you to sickness;

I'm inviting you to health. And, the question is, today, do you want the Lord Jesus Christ? But, I tell you, sir, it is a matter of whosoever will—whosoever will—may come.

III. His Deliverance

Now, the third thing I want you to notice—I want you to notice not only his desperation and I want you to notice not only his decision, but I want you to notice his deliverance. I want you to look here in verses 8 and 9 as we continue to read: *“Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.”* (John 5:8–9) What a miracle took place! This man is greatly, marvelously, wonderfully, supernaturally delivered, and he becomes a picture of salvation; he becomes a picture of a man coming to Christ—not for the healing of his physical body, because Christ did not come primarily to heal physical bodies. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that He got out of there quickly and secretly because there were a great multitude there. (John 5:13)

You'd think that, if He came to heal, He'd just stay around and heal everybody, wouldn't you? He didn't come to heal. If He came to heal, He would've stayed there and healed every person in that place. But, He chose this man. Here is a sign with a significance; here is a miracle with a message. And, what is the message? What is the significance? Showing us how to come and get a greater healing—healing for our spirit, that greater miracle that Gargling was singing about here just a little while back.

Now, just stay there in John chapter 5 and write in the margin “Ephesians 2, verses 8 through 10.” Now, I love those verses, because clearly and concisely, plainly and practically, now and forever, they tell us how to be saved and how to be right with God. If you're not a Christian, if you're not saved and you want to be saved, if you are not certain of going to heaven and you want to go to heaven, then learn Ephesians 2, verses 8 through 10. Nowhere is it more concisely put than right here. Are you ready for it? Do you want to listen to it? Here it is: *“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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Now, there are three prepositions that stand out in those three verses. And, if you get those three prepositions down, you've got your theology of salvation nailed down good. Are you ready for them? The three words—the three prepositions: *by*, *through*, and *unto*—you got that?—*by*, *through*, and *unto*. *“For by grace are ye saved”*—it is *by* grace—*“through faith...unto good works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Got it? Nod your heads. Look intelligent. *“By grace...through faith...unto good works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Now, let's look at this man and see how he illustrates that.

A. By Grace

First of all, now, he was saved by grace. He's totally disabled. He's impotent. He is without strength. He's paralyzed. He can't do it for himself. If it is done, it's going to have to be done by someone else. You see, he is illustrating the grace of God. That's the way salvation is: it's not what we do for ourselves; it's what God through Christ does in us.

Suppose we'd been standing there that day, and we'd heard the Lord Jesus Christ say to this man, "*Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk,*" (John 5:8) and we'd seen him there, and he'd been there, let's say, for thirty-eight years, lying in that spot. We would have said, "Cool it. Wait a minute, whoever you are"—suppose we didn't know Jesus—"Hold it, mister. Don't be cruel to that man. You asked him to do something impossible. If he could have risen, he would have done that a long time ago. And, therefore, since it is impossible, it's unreasonable, and, therefore, I protest." But, while we're arguing, the man is up.

Listen, friend, let me tell you something. Let me give you a definition of Christianity. Do you want it? Are you ready for it? Here it is: the impossible plus the unreasonable plus Jesus Christ is Christianity. Amen? The impossible plus the unreasonable plus Jesus Christ—that's Christianity. You see, God is in the miracle business. Yes, it's impossible that we could be born again, but it's possible through Christ. Yes, it's unreasonable that we can be changed by His grace and by a word, but it happens. It happened to me. It happened to you.

Dr. Harry Ironside used to be the pastor of Moody Church, and before he was the pastor of Moody Church, this great Bible teacher and expositor worked in the Salvation Army. And, he said in an article I read many, many years ago that he was holding a street meeting with the Salvation Army, and they had the brass band there, and people were giving testimonies, and so forth. And, among those giving a testimony was a man who had been a gutter drunkard who had been saved and transformed and been made over anew by the grace of our dear, wonderful Lord. But, while this man was giving that testimonial, a well-dressed man standing on the periphery of the crowd called out and said, "Mister, you're living in a dream world. There's nothing to that. You are just dreaming." And, that well-dressed man felt then a tug on his coattail, and he turned around to see a little girl with a pretty face. And, she looked up at him and said, "Sir, that man who's talking is my daddy. He used to be a drunkard. He used to come home and beat my mother. And, we didn't have enough food to eat, and I didn't have enough clothes to wear. My mother used to cry most of the day. And then, my daddy became a Christian, and now we have plenty to eat. And, look at my pretty dress. And," she said, "Mamma sings most of the day." And then, she said, "Mister, if my daddy is dreaming, please don't wake him up." Amen?

Oh, dear friend, transformed, made over by the greater miracle than the healing of

the physical body. It is by grace—by grace—where people who are totally unable to do it for themselves have something done. A miracle transformation takes place in the heart.

B. Through Faith

But, by grace, through faith. All this man had was the word of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ spoke: *“Rise, take up [your] bed...walk.”* (John 5:8) At that moment, he didn’t even know who Jesus Christ was, but there was something about the authority of His voice and something about how the Holy Spirit takes the words of our Lord and brings them to a human heart that inculcated faith in that man. For the Master had spoken, and he was up. But, notice what Jesus said to him: *“Take up [your] bed.”* (John 5:8) Now folks, he’d been trying to get into that pool for perhaps thirty-eight years. He had a place in line, getting an inch closer, an inch closer, an inch closer. And now, the Lord says, “Step out of line. Take up your bed.”

Suppose there are a couple of fellas who have been standing in line for Super Bowl tickets. And, let’s suppose they’ve been standing in line—let’s say one guy—he’s been standing in line for thirty-eight years to get a ticket to the Super Bowl. For thirty-eight years now, he’s been in line. And, his buddy comes to him and says, “Hey, Joe. Man, I got us two tickets on the fifty-yard line. Come on!” And, he looks at that guy, and he’s about as far from here to that door to that window where they’re selling the tickets. Now, I want to promise you, friend, if he steps out of line, he believes that guy. Doesn’t he? If he steps out of line? See?

Well, the Lord says, “Take up your bed now. Get it out of here. You’re not going to need it any more.” You see, what the Lord was saying is this: “There’s no room for a relapse”—right?—“I mean, you’re getting out here, mister.” You see, the Bible says, *“Put...on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make [no] provision for the flesh, to fulfil the [lust] thereof.”* (Romans 13:14) Do you know what a lot of us do? We want to make a provision for the flesh. Oh, we want to give our hearts to Christ, but we want to keep our place in line. Here’s a guy who says, “Well, I’m gonna quit drinking, but I’m going to keep that fifth around just in case.” He didn’t take up his bed, did he? “I’m gonna quit smoking, but I’m going to keep that carton in the dresser drawer just in case.” You left that bed there—you’re going to be back on it. See? Take up your bed. Get it out of here. Don’t make a provision for the flesh. If you do, you’ll be sorry. *“Put...on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make [no] provision for the flesh.”* (Romans 13:14)

One of my favorite stories is about a daddy who was going away one Saturday afternoon. He had to leave his little boy at home. His little boy was somewhat sick with a semi-cold, a head cold; and so, the daddy gave instructions to the boy, and he said, “Now Son, whatever you do, do not get in that swimming hole with the rest of those

boys.” “Yes, sir, Daddy.” The daddy went off on that Saturday afternoon. When he was driving, he just happened to drive past the swimming hole, and who do you think was out there right in the middle of it? I mean, with all the boys was his son, Jimmy. He stops the car and brings him over. He says, “Son, come over here. Didn’t I expressly tell you not to go swimming?” “Yes, sir, Daddy.” “Don’t you deserve to be punished?” “Well, wait a minute, Daddy. Let me tell you. I didn’t intend to go swimming—really, Daddy. I just came down here to watch the guys swimming. I was just sitting by the shore, just kind of putting my feet in the water because it’s so hot. And, Billy splashed me a little bit, and I got wet some anyway. And, some of the guys were wrestling with me, and I kinda fell in. Well, Dad, I really didn’t mean to go in, but before I knew it, I was just swimming, Daddy.” By that time, the dad, who was once a boy, was feeling kind of sorry for him and was ready to forgive him. Then, he said, “Well, wait a minute. You’ve got your bathing suit on.” “Well,” he said, “I brought it along in case I was tempted.”

Now folks, look, you’ve got to take up that bed. Now listen, in a moment, I’m going to give an invitation for you to come give your heart to Jesus Christ. And, do you know what the devil will say? I know human nature enough. The devil will say to you, “Yes, yes, you need that new life in Christ. You need to be saved. Yes, you surely do, but don’t go forward. Don’t get baptized. Don’t become a part of the family of God. Don’t make it public, because you might need to go back where you used to be. You might not be able to make it. So, just sort of be a secret disciple.” Friend, that’s not faith. Faith says, “I will make it because He said so. I don’t need this bed any more. I’m going to take up this palette. I’m going to pull it up. I’m getting it out of here. I don’t need this place in the old world and in the old line any more.”

C. Unto Good Works

It is “*by grace...through faith...unto good works.*” (Ephesians 2:8–10) Now, I don’t want to insult your intelligence, but I want to tell you what Jesus did not say to the man. Jesus did not say to him, “Walk, take up your bed, and rise.” Jesus said, “*Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk.*” (John 5:8) Do you know the problem with some of you? You say, “Well, I’ve tried the Christian life, and it didn’t work.” Your problem is you tried to walk before you were up. You see, look, you’ve got to rise before you walk. “*As ye have...received [the Lord] Jesus...so walk ye in him.*” (Colossians 2:6) You must have that new birth. You must have that salvation experience. You cannot work out your salvation until God works it in and until you’ve been saved—until you’ve had a miracle so that you become a miracle. Quit trying to live the Christian life without Christ. It is not just difficult; it is impossible.

We’re talking about miracles. And so, you must come to the Lord Jesus Christ and hear Him ask this question: “Would you be made whole?” And then, when you give the

consent of your will at His word, you'll rise. There is the miracle. There's the new birth. Then, you can put away that bed. Then, you can walk. Listen: *"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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."* (Ephesians 2:8–10) "For by grace"—rise. "Through faith"—take up your bed. "Unto good works"—walk. You see, I want to say it again: Jesus is teaching a greater lesson. And, if all you see is the healing of this man and you miss the greater spiritual lesson, then you miss it all.

Later, there were a bunch of Pharisees who got on Jesus's case about this. Do you know what they were all hot and bothered about? Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath day. And, when they saw the man who was made whole, they didn't say, "Who was it that healed you?" They said, "Who told you to take up your bed on the Sabbath day?" (John 5:12) Isn't that something? You talk about straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! That's what they did. They didn't say, "Wow, you've been healed!" They said, "Who told you to carry that mat on the Sabbath day?" (John 5:12) And so, Jesus gets into a contest with them, or, at least, they get into a contest with Jesus.

Now, we're in the same passage, but go down to verse 24 to see how Jesus sums it up and explains the whole thing about this passage here—John 5, verse 24: Jesus says: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* (John 5:24) Why did Jesus say He came? That we might have life. (John 10:10) Now, this man heard the word of Christ, and he received physical healing. But, that was an illustration of those of you today who will hear the Word of God and be saved. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* (John 5:24) Do you know what that word *condemnation* means? It means "judgment."

I want to tell you one of the strangest stories in all history. It took place in 1829. The events surround a person by the name of George Wilson. George Wilson was a mail robber and a murderer, and he was sentenced by the courts in 1829 to be hanged by the neck until dead. But, the President of United States at that time, President Andrew Jackson, for some reason which I do not know, pardoned George Wilson and said that George Wilson was not to be hanged. And, they sent that pardon to the governor and to the warden. And ultimately, they came to George Wilson and said, "You have been pardoned by the President of the United States." Do you know what George Wilson said? "I don't want to be pardoned. I will not accept it. I refuse the pardon." Well, what do you do then? Here's a man sentenced to die. The President pardons him. He refuses the pardon. Do you open the jail and shove him out? Or, do you go ahead and hang him

though the President said he's pardoned? What do you do? Boy, they argued it back and forth. It ended up in the Supreme Court: "What are we going to do about this man who has received a pardon from the President and he refuses to be pardoned? What shall we do?" The Supreme Court met and adjudicated the matter, and Chief Justice John Marshall said this: "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. If it is refused, it is no pardon."

Now, can I apply that to your life? And, incidentally, George Wilson hung by the neck until dead, even though he had been potentially pardoned. Christ has potentially pardoned you. The Lord Jesus loves you, but He's asking you this question: "Do you want to be made whole?"—"*Wilt thou be made whole?*" (John 5:6) And, if you say "no," even though He hung and bled in agony upon that cross, there's nothing that even the Lord can do to keep you out of hell. You'll not go because He sent you; you'll go because you refused your pardon. The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17) Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad that whosoever will may come by grace through faith unto good works? And, we can hear Jesus Christ saying in the spiritual sense, "*Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk.*" (John 5:8)

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer—every head bowed and no one stirring or moving about this great auditorium right now. Father in heaven, I pray today that many in this building will join that parade of miracles that's led by the Lord Jesus Christ—that they will become a miracle, a greater miracle than having a physical paralysis healed, that they will pass from death unto life by believing on Christ. O God, dear God, send your precious Spirit in great power to convict and to draw men, and women, and boys, and girls to Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Desire

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 26, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 6

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

JOHN 6:35

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Introduction

Thank you, Emily Davis. That was magnificent. Would you take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 6? If you did not bring a Bible, there's probably one there in the pew before you. John chapter 6—and when you've found it, look up here. We're in a series of messages talking about the miracles of Jesus Christ. We believe in a miracle-working God, and if you believe the Bible, you'll have no difficulty believing in miracles. If you can get past Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—you'll have no problem with miracles.

Now, the miracle that we're studying today is the feeding of the 5,000—actually many more than 5,000, because the Bible says the number of the men was 5,000. We didn't even count the women and the children; just the men—5,000. It's not to say that women and children don't count, but John said there were 5,000 men there; then there were the women and the children. There could've been as many as 15,000 or more people that Jesus fed with a little lad's lunch. You remember the story. It's one of the

best known stories in all of the Bible. Jesus had been healing many people, and the crowds now are following Him because of the miracles that He did, and now they've outrun Him. And when Jesus comes to the place, there are the multitudes—thousands and thousands and thousands. They're tired. They're hot. They're hungry. And there's not a McDonald's in sight, and so, what are they going to do? And Jesus asked His disciples, "What are we going to do? How are we going to feed them?" Now, Jesus was not asking for information He already knew, as we're going to see in just a moment. And then, the Lord took a little boy's lunch—five loaves and a few fishes—and He fed the multitude with a little lad's lunch. We're going to see all of that, as we look into the sixth chapter here in just a moment.

Jesus performed a miracle, and it was a miracle of feeding physical bodies. But now, listen to me, ladies and gentlemen. What we need to do today is to look beyond the miracle and on to Jesus. Jesus did not come to feed you physically. Jesus did not come to heal you physically. Jesus did not come to solve all of your physical, material problems. He is a Savior. He came to save you from sin, and you need to look beyond these miracles and on to Jesus. "Pastor, do you believe in miracles?" With all my heart, I do. I believe in miracles, but I trust in Jesus. Now, that's what this theme is all about.

Down in your heart, down in the deepest part of your being, there is a hunger that God alone can satisfy. Pascal was a great philosopher and a physicist. He said, "In every man's heart, there is a God-shaped vacuum that God alone can fill through His Son Jesus Christ." And that is the hunger that I want to talk to you about today.

When I was in Israel—I've been there many times—when I was in there, traveling in Israel upon a time, I had some friends traveling with me, and I knew that we were going to go to this spot where there was the feeding of the 5,000, so I thought I would do something to make it memorable. So I asked my guide and friend, I said, "Would you do me a favor? I want you to get me some loaves of bread and some fish, and just put it in a paper sack and bring it with you. When we get to this spot, I'm going to let everybody have a taste of the fish, and everybody a taste of the bread, and it'll just remind us of the miracle that Jesus performed right at that spot." Now, folks, we'd taken the trip over the Sea of Galilee, and it was a sultry day—a hot day. The water was a little rough, and there was sort of a mist there, and the heat, that Middle Eastern heat, it was like we were wearing a lead coat. And the people the night before that had had a big Arabic meal with many things they had never eaten before. Then, early in the morning, we got up and we went across the sea on that boat; then we got out. It was, Brother Bob, oppressively hot.. But, I said, "Now, it's time for the loaves and the fish." And I had a particular man with me, a dear friend of mine, and he saw what I was doing. I had put that fish on a stone table there, and I'd unwrapped the bread. And there happened to be a fly who landed on that fish, and he was walking around on that fish, and it was so hot,

and that man had just come off that rough water. He looked at those loaves and those fish, and he said something to me I will never forget. He said, "If everybody feels like I do, you can feed 5,000 with that." And, you know, I thought about that. There comes a time in our lives where the things of this world do not satisfy. We want something more. And sometimes we just get fed up with the things of this world. And, why is that? Because there is a deeper hunger, and that's what we're going to be talking about today.

Now, let's look in God's Word here in John chapter 6: "And after these things, Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracle which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw a great company come unto him, he said unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? This he said to prove him—that is, to test Philip—for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." By the way, 200 pennyworth would be almost a year's wages of a laboring man. He said, "A man could work all year long and not earn enough money to feed these." And one of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There's a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves: and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." That is, eat until you are perfectly, totally satisfied. Now, that's significant. He didn't say, "Eat a little. Eat as much as you want." And when, "and when they were filled—underscore that—he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."

Now, look up here, and let me give you three propositions. And I pray God the Holy Spirit that He will etch these upon your soul. And, oh, precious friend, precious friend, today, listen to me. You are hungry for more than fish and bread. You're hungry for Jesus. Whether you know it or not, Jesus is life's hidden hunger. Now, I want you to get that into your heart and mind. What you really need—the only thing that will satisfy the deepest longing of your heart and your soul—is Jesus Christ.

Now, here are three propositions I want to give you. Now, I want you to listen to them.

I. There Is No Problem Too Big for Jesus to Solve

Number one, there is never a problem too big for Jesus to solve. Did you hear that? There is never a problem too big for Jesus to solve. In verses 5 through 7, the Lord sees this multitude, and there is a problem, and He asked a man named Philip, He said, "Philip, what are you going to do? What are we going to do? How are we going to feed these people?" Now, folks, Jesus was not seeking advice, and the one who wrote this, the apostle John, who wrote this down, made it very clear that Jesus was not seeking advice when He asked Philip, "How are we going to do this?" He already knew what He was going to do.

One day, I had lunch with Corrie ten Boom. I just listened to her talk. I said, "Adrian, be quiet and listen." And one of the things that she said stuck in my soul like a barb, and I've never forgotten it. Corrie ten Boom said, "There is no panic in heaven, only plans." Now, remember that. God knows what He's going to do. This world is not out of control. Nothing takes God by surprise. God never says, "Oops!" or "Oh!" No, God's not that way. Jesus knew what He would do.

Now I'll tell you another reason that Jesus did not ask Philip this question. He did not want to learn something about Philip. He already knew about Philip. The Bible says He knew all men. He didn't need that any should testify to Him what was in man. Why did Jesus ask Philip this question? He wanted Philip to learn something about Philip. So, He says to Philip, He said, "Philip, how are we going to feed all of these people?" Now, look in verse 7: Philip answered Him, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Now, Jesus said, "Philip, what are we going to do?" Now, Philip did not stumble.

Evidently, Philip was good with numbers, and maybe had a—well, not in that day, but today he might've had a pocket calculator, and taken it out, and punched up, and figured it out very quickly. He knew exactly how much it would take to feed these—a year's wages that everyone would have about a mouthful; and he was correct, except for one thing. As he figured all of this out, he left Jesus out of the equation. And therefore, any good red-blooded American atheist could've given the same answer that Philip gave. Philip gave a good answer, but a bad answer, because he left Jesus Christ out of the equation.

Now, I've been around churches for a long time. I've been pastoring churches for years, and I've been in a lot of committee meetings. As a matter of fact, I'm kind of like that preacher who said he wanted to go to heaven, not because there'd be no parting there, but because there'd be no meetings there. And, I've been in a lot of committee meetings, and I've found out that almost every committee meeting that you ever get to about the church is composed of three categories of people. There are the figurers, there are the feelers, and there are the faithers. The figurers are like Philip; they just

figure it out, and say, "Well, Pastor, we can do this, and we can't do that." They leave God out of the equation! And then, there are the feelers. They just say, "Well, I feel we can do this, or I feel we can do that." And both of them are wrong. But the fathers are those who get a word from God, and believe if God wants us to do it, then we can do it. There's no reason for us to send the multitudes away. Our commission from the Heavenly Father is to give them the bread of life, and, if He has commanded us to do it, He will enable us to do it. And say, Amen. He will, my friend. Now, you listen to me. We don't need the figurers. We don't need the feelers. We need the fathers. Nothing wrong with figuring. Nothing wrong with feeling. But, friend, there is much wrong if you leave out faith in this matter. And so, Philip just simply said, "Well, it's an impossibility."

I heard of a little boy who was trying to lift a rock. His dad was up there watching the little fellow try to move the rock. And his dad heard him, as little boys are wont to do, just grunting and straining trying to roll that rock over. And he asked the little boy, "Are you using all of your strength?" He said, "Yes, Daddy, I'm using all of my strength." He said, "No, you're not." He said, "Yes, I am." He said, "No, you're not. You haven't asked me to help you." And what the dad was saying, "Son, I am part of your strength. I'm your father. Ask me." And so many times, we have a problem that we're trying to solve. We're using all of our strength, so we think, but there is a heavenly Father who is ready to help us, and to move in and to help us with our problem.

Now, I want to ask you a question. I want to ask you a question. What is there about your life that is unexplainable? I could've explained Philip. Philip is working on the realm of the natural. What is there about my life that is unexplainable? Now, if you can explain Adrian Rogers apart from Jesus Christ, then I don't have any right to ask you to believe in the God that I serve. What is there about your life that is unexplainable? When the unexplainable is obvious in our lives, then people are going to be believing the Gospel that we preach. What makes you different from your neighbor? Philip just gave the answer that anybody could've given that day. He left Jesus Christ out of the calculation, out of the figuring. Here's the point I'm putting in your heart and in your mind by the aid of the Holy Spirit. There is no problem too big for Him to solve. And I hope you believe that. Do you believe it? Say, Amen.

II. There Is No Person Too Small for God to Use

All right now, here's the second thing. There's no problem too big for God to solve. Number two, there is no person too small for God to use. No problem for God to solve, no person too small for God to use. Now, in verses 8 through 11, we read this: "One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes." Not even big fish! Sardines. Barley loaves—the coarsest, the poorest of bread. Sometimes they would feed the animals the

barley loaves. Here's a little boy and a meager lunch—a little lad, a little lunch. It was meager! Meager in quality, meager in quantity, and yet when that little boy left home, he had in his little paper sack, or his knapsack, or whatever he had, enough food to feed more than 10,000 people—5,000 men—in a little lad's lunch! Now, listen. There's no problem too big for God to solve, and there's no person too small for God to use.

What was the recipe of this miracle? Well, first of all, this little lad transferred his lunch to Christ. It was transferred to Christ. He simply gave all that he had to Jesus Christ. Now, do you want God to use you? Have you given everything to Jesus Christ? You say, "That's absurd! I need some myself." Friend, may I tell you, you've got a real problem. You need to give everything—I mean everything, I mean everything, I mean totally, I mean one hundred percent, all that you have, all that you are, your family, your friends, your reputation—I mean totally, totally to Jesus Christ, if you want Him to use you. And you say, "Well now, wait a minute. A man's got to live." No, a man's got to die. And he's got to face the Lord. You say, "Well, I'd lose out if I gave it all to Him." No, that's the only way you'll gain. He that will save his life shall lose it. He that will lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. You say, "Adrian, that sounds like fanaticism to me." You can call it whatever you want, but if He is Lord at all, He must be Lord of all. Is that right? You know it is right. He, this little lad, gave his total lunch to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was transferred to Jesus Christ.

Joyce and I have gotten on our knees. We did this shortly after our baby died, but we'd done it before that, and said, "Lord Jesus, we give You totally, one hundred percent, all that we have and all that we are." And, God has given us a few material possessions, but we do not call those our own; and if God wants them, they're there for Him to have, and we hold them lightly with an open hand. Here this little boy's lunch was transferred completely to Christ, and what was given to Christ not only was transferred to Christ, but it was taken by Christ. You offer it to Him—sincerely, completely, totally—He'll take it. He'll take it. Transferred to Christ, taken by Christ, and touched by Christ.

Listen. Jesus Christ will do far more with it than you could ever do with it. And not only was it touched by Christ, it was transformed by Christ. And a little lad's lunch fed everybody. It's amazing what Jesus Christ will do with little if you will simply give it to Him. Did this little boy lose his lunch? I will promise you he had more to eat than he would've had had he not given it to Jesus Christ. Don't you know that? My friend, there was food left over when the whole thing was over, and they all ate as much as they would.

Now, listen to me. Don't you dare insult God by saying that God cannot use you. Don't say, "Well, God can use certain people." Listen. It was not Simon Peter that God used; it wasn't even Simon Peter, Andrew's brother, that God used primarily. It was a little boy. God specializes in using just ordinary people in extraordinary ways. You see

your calling, brother, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. God hath taken the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and God will take you, me, people like us, and God will use us wonderfully if we will give all that we have to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not your ability; it is your availability. It is not your fame; it is your faith. It is not who you are; it is who you know—whose you are—that counts. Do you know the Lord Jesus? Have you given it all to the Lord Jesus? Listen. God specializes in using the little people of this world. When I say little people, I don't mean that in a derogatory sense. Listen very carefully. You may be too big for God to use, but you'll never be too small for God to use. God took a little lad here—I think it's almost God's joke—and with a little lad's lunch, He fed the multitudes.

Now, you just study the history of the Bible. Just find those that made a mark on this world. There was Mary who had an alabaster box of ointment. There was a feast day, and all of the big shots were there—not a feast day, but a banquet—after Lazarus had been raised from the dead. Mary came in with her alabaster box of ointment. She broke it and bathed the feet of the Lord Jesus and kissed His feet and bathed His feet with her tears and that ointment. And the perfume of what Mary did has filled the world to this day, the fragrance of that deed. And Jesus said, "Wherever the gospel is preached, what Mary did will be spoken of as a memorial of her." A little lad's lunch. Mary's little box of ointment.

I read in the Bible about a little boy whose name was David. He had a little peach fuzz on his chin, just a stripling of a lad. He went out that day, and there was a giant, Goliath, over nine feet tall. The NBA would like him! Here's Goliath, over nine feet tall. It was the original Bigfoot. And he's out there belching out blasphemies against the God of Israel. And I read where God took David, a little boy, with a sling, and went out against that mighty Goliath. Billy Sunday said that David hit him on the coco, and he went down for the count of ten. And that is true—he was gone, done for! Why? Because a little lad used what he had, and God used it to give victory that day to the Philistines.

I read in the Bible about a woman, a widow, who came down and put her two cents worth—her widow's mite, actually less than two cents—in the offering plate, and Jesus, who stood there, was watching, and saw what they all did, and the Bible says there were many rich people there that day. But the Bible says that this woman gave more than they all; not more than any of them, more than all of them. And what she gave that day has been used to feed multitudes, because literally millions and billions of dollars have been given to the cause of Christ because of the influence of that little woman.

Here's a little lad's lunch. Here's a little boy with five smooth stones. Here's a little woman with a box of perfume. Here is a widow with two mites. I want to say again. Don't you dare say that God cannot use you. God needs you. God wants you. He will use you. There is no problem too big for God to solve. There is no person too small for God

to use. Do you believe that? I hope you believe it. I really do.

III. There Is No Hunger Too Deep for Jesus to Satisfy

Now here's the third, and here's the major thing I want you to see. There's no problem too big for God to solve. There's no person too small for God to use. But the third and the most important thing I want you to see: there is no hunger too deep for Jesus to satisfy. There is no hunger too deep for Jesus to satisfy. Now, don't get the idea that Jesus came to this earth to feed people physical bread. He did not. He did not. He came to save souls, and to give everlasting life, and you need to look beyond the miracle and on to Jesus, because this miracle is only an illustration of a much greater truth. The miracle literally happened. Believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 25, after all of this was over: "And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles—that is, because you understood them—but because you did eat the loaves, and were filled." Jesus said, "The only thing you're looking for is more bread. That's the only reason you seek Me." And then, here's what Jesus said—listen to me: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat—that food—which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you: for him hath the Father sealed."

And then, verse 28. "Then said they unto him, What should we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

A. Jesus Is Spiritual Bread

Now, what Jesus is saying is, "I am spiritual bread. You're looking for food that will perish. You'll eat it. In a few more hours, you will be hungry again." He is saying, "I am to your spirit what bread is to your body. You need to see beyond the miracle!" Now, these people were following Him because He fed them. What buttered their bread determined their devotion. This is what we call today the social gospel. You know, we'll build a building like this, and always, inevitably, somebody will say, "Why did you build that building? Why didn't you just take that money and feed the poor?" They miss the whole point. If you had five billion dollars and could spend a dollar to give everybody on earth a portion of food, in several more hours, they'd all be hungry again. You see, what we're talking about, we are not talking about a social gospel. A social gospel is soup, soap, but man needs salvation. Now, I'm not saying that we ought not to feed the hungry. I'm not saying that we ought not to care for the poor. We ought to. But what difference does it make if you feed a man and he dies and goes to hell? That's what it's all about. Most people today are just interested in making the world a better place to go

to hell from. What our Lord Jesus Christ is talking about here is everlasting life, getting a person saved. What a shame that some that day missed the significance. And Jesus said, "The only reason that you're following Me is for the bread." And when, later on, when Jesus Christ began to talk to these people about spiritual reality, when Jesus Christ began to talk to these people about eating His flesh and drinking His blood—that is, partaking of Him Himself—they left Him. And I've seen it happen so many times. You can have programs at church that will get people down to the church, and you can get them with fun and games and suppers and dinners and plays and programs and all of this, but if that's all you give them, and you don't give them Jesus, friend, you have missed the whole thing. What you catch them with is what you have to keep them with. I am in favor of using any method as a platform for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but there is no substitute for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And Christ came as the bread of life, that people must be saved. They must be born again. And so many churches are missing this today. Jesus is spiritual bread. Do you have that? He is spiritual bread.

B. Jesus Is Supernatural Bread

Now here's the second thing. Jesus is supernatural bread. He is supernatural bread. Look, if you will now, in verse 30 of this same chapter: "They said wherefore unto him, What signs showest thou then, that we may see and we may believe thee? What dost thou work?" Well, good night! He's just fed 5,000. Now, they're asking for another sign. You see, this is the problem with miracles. Miracles never satisfy. They never meet the deepest need of a man's life. He is saying, "Well, you need to believe on Me. You need Me!" They say, "Well, give us a sign." You see, an evil and an adulterous generation seeks a sign. And Jesus goes on to speak of His heavenly origin. They said, "What sign showest thou, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?" Now again, here are these miracle mongers wanting signs and miracles. And they said, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." He's saying, "In that day, it wasn't Moses who gave it to you. God gave it to you. And in this day, God is giving you that true bread. He is giving you supernatural bread." "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life." Now, underscore that—underscore that. This is the meaning of the miracle. This is the significance of the sign. Jesus said, in verse 35, "I am the bread of life."

Now, look, if you will, at the corollary of that: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you that ye also have seen me and believe not." Jesus is supernatural bread. What they didn't understand was that He was the Messiah. He was the Son of God, and He was God the

Son. Nicodemus said, in the third chapter of John, "We know that you're a teacher come from God." Yes, He was, but He was more than a teacher come from God; He was God come to teach. He was the One who came down from heaven, and the manna in the Old Testament that Moses gave those people only pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, all of the Bible is about Jesus. And they were saying, "Well, Moses gave us bread." Jesus said, "Look. Moses didn't give it to you. God gave it to you. And I have come from the Father. I am the true bread of life." All that manna in the Old Testament did was to picture, illustrate, and prophesy the Lord Jesus. It came down from heaven like Jesus came down from heaven. It lay upon the ground, which speaks of the humility and the humanity of the Lord Jesus. It was round—that spoke of His eternity. It was white—that spoke of His purity. It had the taste of honey—that spoke of the sweetness of His life. It had in it the taste of oil—that spoke of the Holy Spirit that was upon Him. It had to be reached down, and taken up, and that shows that Jesus must be appropriated and fed upon. It sustained them physically, and Jesus sustains us spiritually. All of that in the Old Testament was an illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is supernatural bread.

Remember this, folks: It's Jesus that you need. You've got a hunger in your heart. I'm telling you, it is Jesus that you need. He is heaven's bread. He was bruised for us. He was baked for us. He was broken for us. You need to feed upon Jesus, who is the bread of life.

C. Jesus Is Satisfying Bread

Now, here's the third thing I want to say about it. Listen. Jesus is spiritual bread. Jesus is supernatural bread. He is the Son of God. And Jesus is satisfying bread. Look, if you will, again, in verse 35—look at it. Jesus says here, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Well, now, what's He talking about? Is He talking about physical hunger? If He is, this is a lie. How many Christians have ever been hungry and thirsty? You see, He's not saying, if you get saved that you'll never have another hunger pain. He's not saying if you get saved, when you cut the grass on an August day, that you'll not want to go in and get a drink of water. What's He saying? Use your heads. Use your hearts. Understand what He is saying! I am supernatural bread! And I am satisfying bread. Jesus is what you need. "Friends all around me are trying to find what their heart yearns for, by sin undermined. I have the secret. I know where 'tis found. Only true pleasures in Jesus abound." "Jesus is all this world needs today. Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way. Oh, to pull back the grim curtains of night. One look at Jesus, and all will be light."

Listen, my beloved friend—you need Jesus Christ. The thing that you're hungering for, that your soul desires, whether you know it or not, is Jesus. You need the Lord Jesus Christ. He and He alone can satisfy the deepest longing of your heart.

Men are searching everywhere for satisfaction. They'll never find it till they find it in

the Lord Jesus! Why, what did God create you for? Well, you say, "God created me to serve Him." Well, that's ridiculous. If He wanted someone to serve Him, He'd get somebody a lot better than us. He could get angels. They have abilities, and they obey in ways that you and I don't. God made you to love Him. God is love, and what good is love if it is not shown, if it is not received. And God made us that He might have fellowship with us, that He might love us, and God doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because God loved us. That's what you were made for! That's what you were created for—to know Him and to love Him. God made a bird to fly in the sky. God made a fish to swim in the sea. And God made you to know Him, to love Him, and to worship Him; and, until you do, you'll be like a bird in the sea, and like a fish in the air—you'll be out of your element. Your element is Jesus. In Him, we live and move and have our being. You were made to know Him, to love Him, to worship Him. Do you understand that? Until you do—until you do—you will have what Pascal was talking about in our introduction—you will have that vacuum. You will have that emptiness. You'll say, "Why doesn't anything work out?" I'll tell you why. You're thirsty and you're hungry for Jesus! You need to be saved. You need the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

So, listen. What did Jesus say? What did Jesus say? Let me give you another scripture here that you might put in your margin. Put down there Matthew chapter 5 and verse 6. Jesus said, in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." That is, they shall be satisfied. You are to seek the Lord. You are to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Now, what did our Lord say in verse 27? "Don't labor for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." So, what should you do? You are to labor for, or you are to seek, food that endures to everlasting life.

Now, how should you seek the Lord? Listen carefully.

1. You Should Seek the Lord Preeminently

You need to seek the Lord preeminently. Write that down—preeminently. Now, you know what the natural man wants? Do you know what many people in this building want? You want fame, you want fortune, you want friends, you want fashion, and you want fitness. Jesus said, "After all these things the Gentiles seek." That's what you want! You're looking for satisfaction in the wrong places. Now, none of these are wrong in themselves. Fame and food and fashion and fitness and friends—they're all fine in their place, but their place must be second place. Matthew 6, verse 33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." You see, Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Now, what most people are doing is hungering and thirsting after blessedness. "Bless me, Lord. Bless me, Lord. I want a blessing." No. Quit seeking a

blessing, and start seeking righteousness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Who is righteousness? Christ is our righteousness. You are to seek the Lord Jesus as a hungry man would seek bread, and you are to seek Him first. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Now, what happens if you just simply try to be happy, if you just simply try to satisfy yourself? What happens? What is wrong with that? Well, you've got it backward. You see, a man—any man, any woman—who tries to be blessed, who tries to be happy, who tries to have joy and fulfillment, any person who sets out to do that, will never find it. He's like a dog chasing his tail—he'll never catch it. The most miserable people on earth are the people who are trying to be blessed. The most miserable people on earth are the people who are trying to be satisfied. Listen. You'll never find it. If you don't believe what I'm telling you, go to some of the resort cities—I mean, where the high muckety mucks walk, those who have plenty of money in their billfold. They have gone to these resorts to try to be happy. Walk down the street and look at their faces. You'll see better faces on bottles of iodine. These people are miserable. They're absolutely, totally miserable, and you have to feel sorry for them, because they're the ones who finally reached the top of the ladder, and found out there's nothing here. At least, those who are down lower, at least they have some hope: "When I get up there, maybe it'll be there." But these people are up there, and they know it is not there! And, when a man is seeking to find satisfaction in the things of this world, he will never find them. Why? Because that dissatisfaction that you have is simply a symptom of a sickness which is sin, and the answer to that sickness is righteousness. Suppose you had a fever, and you went to the doctor, and the doctor gave you a palliative to ease the fever and to kill the pain, but he never dealt with the infection, what kind of a doctor would that be? What kind of a doctor would that be? That would be a mighty poor doctor. And yet most people today are simply trying to kill the pain. They never deal with the disease. Jesus said you are to hunger and thirst after righteousness. He is heaven's bread for your hunger. When you feed on the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to look behind, you're going to see you're blessed. Happiness, joy, blessedness, satisfaction is never something that you find by searching for it; it's something you stumble over when you serve the Lord Jesus Christ. You are to seek Him preeminently. Jesus is what you need.

Every now and then, I'll preach and somebody will say to me, "Adrian, have you got the second blessing?" I say, "Man, listen. I've got the third and the fourth and the fifth." Listen. What is the second blessing? The second blessing is just discovering what you got blessed with in the first one. You'll never go beyond Jesus. You can go into Jesus. You need more of Jesus. But listen. Jesus is all; He is everything! In Him is the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and when you receive the Lord Jesus, you receive everything.

The second blessing is discovering what you got in the first blessing, and the third blessing is discovering you didn't discover it all in the second blessing. I'm telling you there is more and more in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are to seek Jesus preeminently.

2. You Should Seek the Lord Purposefully

I'll tell you something else about Him. You are to seek Him purposefully. He says, "Labour for this meat." When a man is hungry physically—when a man is hungry physically—what is the thing that he seeks? It's bread! He's not interested in the playoffs in a basketball game. He's not interested in politics—Republicans and Democrats and independents. This man is not interested in art. He's not interested in flower arrangements. If a man is a hungry man, he is interested in one thing—that is food. And if he's starving, he'll take food out of a garbage can. Is that not true? And you see a man who gets critical and complains and begins to find fault with a meal, you can understand that he's not a hungry man. One woman decided she would satisfy her bickering, complaining husband. She said, "What do you want for breakfast?" He said, "I want eggs—I want two. I want one scrambled and one fried." "Well," she said, "all right, dear." And she scrambled one, and fried one. He sat there with a pout. She said, "What's wrong?" He said, "You scrambled the wrong egg." You find people like this who complain. You know what their problem is? They're not hungry. Did you know that you can come to church and find fault? You can come to Bellevue Baptist Church and find fault. You can go to any Sunday School class and find fault. If you want to look at any preacher—this one included—you can find fault. That's very easy to find. It'd be like a person sitting down at a banquet, and saying, "Well, the china is chipped," or "the parsley is on the wrong side of the plate" or, "The silverware is not polished." You see, what's wrong with a person like that? He's not a hungry person—he's not a hungry person. A hungry person is a humble person, and a humble person says, "My poor soul—it must be fed." And the problem with so many of us is we're stuffed full of the bread of this world that we have no appetite for the Lord Jesus Christ. For Jesus said, "You are following me for the fish and the loaves. Labour for that meat that endures to everlasting life." You are to seek Jesus preeminently.

You are to seek Jesus purposefully. With all of your heart, with all of your soul, with as much as in you is, seek the Lord Jesus Christ! You'll be glad you did—you'll be glad you did. I'm telling you, one of these days, sooner than you realize, you're going to turn up your toes and die; and then you'll wish you'd sought Him. But if you'll seek Him in this life, you'll be glad that you did.

3. You Should Seek the Lord Perpetually

Let me just say finally, you are to seek Him continually, perpetually—perpetually. Now, listen. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for

they shall be filled." You know, when Jesus performed this miracle—when Jesus performed this miracle—they were filled! They had all they wanted. But I want to ask you a question: Did they get hungry again? Yeah. Well, when you feed on the Lord Jesus Christ, does that mean you just eat one meal and stop? No. Do you know what God has done? God has given you perpetual appetite that you might be perpetually satisfied. In the physical realm—in the physical realm—if you have no appetite, you're either fed, dead, diseased, or sick, or something. If you have no appetite, it's just because you've already eaten, or because you're sick, or because you're dead. Now, let's apply that to the spiritual realm. You ought to thank God for your appetite, because it's your appetite that shows you have health spiritually. When you feed on the Lord Jesus, how do you feed on Him? Continually. You say, "Well, wait a minute. If you're satisfied, why would you want more?" Because God made you where you'd both be satisfied, and then get hungry again, and then get satisfied again.

Have you ever, at a Thanksgiving meal, you eat and you sit about three inches from the table and eat till you touch the table? You get up, and you say, "I don't care if I ever eat another thing the rest of my life. I mean, this is it. This is, I'm done." And that's about 2:00. And not even about 7:30, you're back in the refrigerator, looking in there, you know, to see what's in there. Well, why? That's just the way God made us. God made us perpetually, with an appetite that we might be continually satisfied.

How do you stay happy in Jesus? Feed on Him, and keep on feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ. Feed on Him, and keep on feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Let me tell you again, folks. Look beyond the miracle. Look beyond the physical bread, and on to Jesus! What your heart yearns for, what you need, what you want, the only way you'll ever find satisfaction, is to find satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is God's answer to your deepest hunger. Jesus alone can take the pain out of life, the sting out of sin, the gloom out of the grave, and give a hope that is steadfast and sure.

I love Jesus. If I had a thousand lives, I'd give Him every one. Not only is Jesus necessary; He is enough. And not only is He enough; He is more than enough, There were twelve basketsful left over. He will give you the deepest need of your heart. You will never be satisfied, until you know Jesus, heaven's bread.

Bow your heads and close your eyes. If you're not saved, I want to help you to get saved today. You can pray right where you are and believe on Him, trust Him. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Pray this prayer: "Lord, I'm hungry. The bread of this life doesn't satisfy me. I'm hungry. O Lord, I have a need. I need Jesus. Lord Jesus, I receive You now as my Lord and Savior. Give me, Lord, of Yourself. By faith, Lord, I receive You. I feed upon You. Come into my heart."

Heaven's Bread for Earth's Hunger

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 8, 2000

Main Scripture Text: John 6:1–11, 25–27, 30–35, 47–51, 67–68

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Introduction

Now, I spend a lot of time in airports. And, if I'm waiting on a plane, there's one thing that never fails to amuse me and entertain me, and it's just to sit back and watch people go past. Have you ever done that—looked at people? Don't tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor. Just watch them—they are so different. But, I'll tell you one thing that is common about all human beings: they are filled with unfulfilled desires and dissatisfaction.

Schopenhauer was a brilliant man. He was a philosopher, and here's what he said toward the close of his life, I believe: "Life is a curse of endless cravings and endless unhappiness." How would you like to have that for a philosophy? That's what he said: "Life is a curse"—not a blessing, a curse—"of endless cravings and endless unhappiness." Now, he was a philosopher. Pascal put it another way. He said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man, which only God can fill through Jesus Christ." How right he was! How wrong Schopenhauer was, because he did not understand the Lord Jesus.

The story that I'm going to read to you is a story that is very familiar. It is the feeding of the five thousand. John chapter 6—let's begin reading, if we would, in verse 1—John chapter 6 and verse 1: *“After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, he saw a great company come unto him, [and] he saith [to] Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him”—that is, to test Philip—“for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”* (John 6:1–7)

I. There Is No Problem Too Big for God to Solve

Now, let me just stop right there and give you the first point in this message, and I hope you'll believe this with all of your heart: there is no problem too big for God to solve—no problem too big for God to solve. Here was a problem: a great multitude. There's no bread out there; there's no food for them. And so, Jesus is asking Philip a question: Jesus said, “Philip, what are we going to do? How are we going to feed these people?” (John 6:5) Point: Jesus was not asking advice. Jesus never asked advice for anyone, from anyone about anything, in the true sense of the word. I love what Corrie ten Boom said: “There's no panic in heaven, only plans.” The Bible says here that Jesus *“knew what he would do.”* (John 6:6) And, Jesus was not wanting to learn anything about Philip. He knew all men. He knew what was in Philip's heart. He knows what's in your heart. What He wanted was for Philip to learn something about God, and I want you to learn something about God—and that is this: that there's no problem too big for God to solve.

Now, Jesus asked Philip, “How are we going to feed these people?” Well, Philip didn't stumble. Now, I don't know that he had a pocket calculator, but had he been a modern he'd have whipped out his calculator and tapped it a couple of times. But, Philip was a brilliant man, so he figured it out. He looked: there were five thousand men, then there are the women, then there are the children...and how much food it would take. And so, he says, “Well, Lord, if you were to give everybody a mouthful, it would take the wages of a laboring man for a year.” (John 6:7) Now, he didn't do anything that a good red-blooded atheist could not have done that day. I mean, he calculated, but he did not come to the right conclusion, because he left something out of the equation. What did he leave out? God—God.

Now, on church committees—I've been around churches for a long time, and there

are three categories of persons on church committees. If you meet and you have a problem, first of all, there are the feelers. The feelers say, “Well, I feel we ought to do this.” Somebody else says, “I feel we ought to do that.” They’re driven by emotion. Secondly, there are the figurers. The figurers don’t pay much attention to the feelers. They just figure it out—whether or not it can be done. But, thank God, there’s a third group on church committees, and we’ve got a lot of them around here: they are the faithers—not the feelers, not the figurers, but the faithers. They just simply find out what God wants to do, and they say, “We’re going to do it. Anything God wants done we can do.”

Now, it did not make sense apart from God. With God it makes perfect sense. Apart from God it is unexplainable. Now folks, the only thing we, as a church, have any right to ask this community to believe about us—and the only thing, as an individual, that you have any right to ask an unbeliever to believe about you—is that which is unexplainable. I mean, if they can explain my life, if my neighbor can explain my life, then I don’t have anything supernatural; all I have is something superficial. Is there in your heart and in your life a quality that is inexplicable and unexplainable apart from Almighty God?

Now, there’s no problem too big for God to solve. Say, “Amen.” You take the problem that you have right now; think of it. Got it? All right. Now, double it. Did you double it? Double it again. Now, I want to ask you this question: Is that big to God? No, absolutely not. He may not solve it the way you want it solved, but I’m telling you there is no problem too big for God to solve. And, if you’re acting like God is dead or God is out of business, or if you’re like Philip and only calculating, if you are a feeler or a figurer rather than a faither, repent of it, and believe this, number one: there is no problem too big for God to solve.

II. There Is Never a Person Too Small for God to Use

Second point: There is never a person too small for God to use. Now, what did God do here with this problem? What did the Lord Jesus do? Well, begin now in verse 8: “*One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes*”—now, they were probably sardines—“*but what are they among so many? And Jesus sad, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So [that] the men sat down, in number about five thousand*”—now, we say this was the feeding of the five thousand; it was five thousand men—“*And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*” (John 6:8–11) “You want some more? Here’s some more. Would you have a second helping? Eat until you are full.”

Now, here's a little lad and a little lunch. When the little lad and a little lunch started out, he had enough to feed five thousand people plus—maybe as many as twenty thousand. Now, it was meager in quality, because they were barley loaves. That's the coarsest of bread. It was meager in quantity, because there were just a few biscuits and a couple of sardines.

Now, what was the recipe for this banquet? All right. Remember, there's no problem too big for God to solve. Remember, there's no person too small for God to use. Here's a little boy's lunch, and he gives it to Jesus. Let me give you some words that start with the letter "T" so you can remember them. Here's the recipe for a miracle.

1. It Was Transferred to Christ

First of all, it was transferred to Christ. He gave everything to Christ. Joyce and I have done this. Early in our ministry, we gave everything to Jesus. Now, we hold title to it, but we've said, "Lord, anything you want is yours. We just give it to you. It belongs to you. It's not ours. We're stewards." Number one: It was transferred to Christ.

2. It Was Taken by Christ

Number two: It was taken by Christ. You give it; Jesus receives it. This little lad gave up his lunch. Now, you've got to be a pretty good little boy to give your lunch to Jesus. But, he just turned it over. It was transferred to Christ. It was taken by Christ.

3. It Was Touched by Christ

It was touched by Christ. Jesus took it, touched it, and blessed it with His magnificent hands.

4. It Was Transformed by Christ

And, therefore, it was transformed by Christ—transferred, taken, touched, and transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ. And, that's the recipe for a miracle. You take your little; transfer it to Jesus. Jesus will receive it. He will touch it. He will multiply it and feed multitudes with it.

Now, let me tell you some good news: I have seen, in my ministry, people who are too big for God to use, but I've never seen anybody too small for God to use. Think about it now. God enjoys taking insignificant things and persons and using them for His glory: the widow's mite, David and his sling, Dorcas's needle. Here's a little lad and his lunch. You know how He does that? He takes ordinary people, does extraordinary things with ordinary people, and then God gets the glory. You see, this could not be explained apart from God.

Now, don't you insult God by saying God cannot use you. There's no person too small for God to use. God used a little boy and his little paper bag, his little lunch there, with his biscuits and sardines. Think about it: God can use you—listen—God can use

you. God can use you now. God can use you where you are. God can use you with what you have, and you must say, “Amen.” Let’s try it again: God can use you. God can use you where you are. God can use you with what you have, and you must say, “Amen. God can use me.”

I read a story a long time ago about a violinist who was in New Jersey. He was going to play a concert, and people were talking about the violin as much as they were the violinist, though he was a great, magnificent concert violinist. He stood up and began to play that violin. And, you could hear the birds singing in the trees. You could hear laughter of little children. You could hear babbling brooks. You could hear the wind going through the forest. You could hear it all as he played the violin. And, the people gave round after round of applause. And then, he took the violin and broke it over his knee—smashed it. They gave a gasp. He said, “Don’t worry. It was only a little fiddle. It was just cheap.” He said, “I just wanted to show you it’s not so much the instrument as it is the man who holds the instrument.” And, so it is with you; so it is with Adrian. God can take our lives, and we just transfer it to our Lord. It’ll be touched by our Lord; it’ll be transformed by our Lord.

III. There Is Never a Spiritual Hunger Too Deep for Jesus to Satisfy

There’s never a problem too big for God to solve. There’s never a person too small for God to use, and there’s never a spiritual hunger too deep for Jesus to satisfy. Now, the people there were hungry. They were hungry for literal bread. Begin looking, if you will now, in this passage of Scripture, in verse 25: “*And when they had found him*”—that is, Jesus—“*on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, [You] seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled*”—He said, “The reason you’re looking for me is because I fed you literal bread.” And then, notice what He says here in verse 27 of this passage. He says—“*Labour not for the meat*”—and that literally means “for the food”—“*[that will perish]*”—“*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat*”—or, “that food”—“*which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*” (John 6:25–27) Now, there’s never a hunger too deep—a spiritual hunger—that Jesus cannot satisfy. Jesus is earth’s bread for heaven’s hunger.

Now, these people were following Jesus because they were looking for material bread—physical bread. Listen to me: your spirit also has a hunger; there is a spiritual hunger. And, Jesus is saying to those people, “I am to your spirit what bread is to your body.”

Now, what does it matter if we feed people and we don’t tell them about Jesus?

Now, I believe in feeding hungry people but never as a substitute for evangelism. *Man needs more than soap and soup; he needs salvation.* He needs the Lord Jesus. Now, there are a lot of people who get all teary-eyed about feeding the hungry—and we ought to do that—but God forbid that we should feed the hungry and never tell them about Jesus. All we’re doing is making the world a better place to go to hell from. We are here to teach them and to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, Jesus said, “Look, you’re following me—you’re following me—because you ate of the bread. That’s why you’re following me.” (John 6:26) That ought to be a great lesson to us. And, by the way, Jesus did not commend them for that. Jesus knew what was in their hearts, and He began to talk to them about spiritual bread, feeding on Him for their spiritual hunger.

Now, we ought to learn a lesson as a church. I believe in all kinds of programs. You know, we have a multiplicity of programs here at Bellevue Baptist Church, but beneath them all, and in them all, and through them all, and over them all is one purpose—and that’s to get folks saved. Folks, listen, what you catch them with is what you have to keep them with. You’re going to find out that these people came for bread only, and they left when Jesus started talking about the realities of life. So, what kind of bread is Jesus?

A. Jesus Is Spiritual Bread

Verses 25 through 29: Jesus is spiritual bread—Jesus is spiritual bread. Notice verse 27: *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that...which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.”* (John 6:27) Jesus is spiritual bread.

B. Jesus Is Supernatural Bread

Jesus is supernatural bread. Notice in verse 30: *“[And] they said therefore unto [them], What sign shewest thou...that we may see, and believe thee?”*—boy, this ought to tell us something about people who seek signs. He just fed five thousand with a little boy’s lunch, and they’re saying, “Give us a miracle.” You see, miracles are addictive, but they never really satisfy—*“What sign shewest thou...that we may see, and believe thee? [Of] what dost thou work?”*—and then, they begin to tell Him a little history about the Bible. They say—*“Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger”*

and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (John 6:30–35)

Now, follow with me: Jesus is spiritual bread, and Jesus is supernatural bread. They said, “Oh, listen, Jesus, we remember how manna came down and fed the people in the wilderness, how Moses gave us that bread.” He said, “Moses didn’t give it to you; God gave it to you, and it was only a picture of me. I am the bread of life.” I told you this morning that all the Bible is about Jesus. What was the manna? The manna, Jesus tells us clearly here in John chapter 6, was a picture of Jesus. (John 6:35) The manna came down from heaven; Jesus came down from heaven. The manna lay upon the ground; Jesus is meek and lowly. The manna was round, which speaks of the eternity of Jesus. The manna was white, which speaks of the purity of Jesus. The manna had the taste of honey, which speaks of the sweetness of Jesus. The manna had the taste of oil, which speaks of the anointing that was on the Lord Jesus. The manna had to be picked up, which speaks of the resurrection of Jesus. The manna had to be ingested, which speaks of partaking of Jesus. The manna sustained physical life, which speaks of Jesus, who gives us eternal life. All of that—all of that—was a picture of Jesus. He is not only spiritual bread; He is supernatural bread. He came down from heaven.

We’re going to have the Lord’s Supper here in a little bit. And, we’re going to take bread in our hands, and we’re going to eat bread. And, do you know how this bread has been made? This bread was bruised—was put through the mill and bruised. And then, it was baked—it was put through the fire and baked. And then, it was turned into loaves that were broken. That’s the body of the Lord Jesus Christ—bruised for our iniquities, baked in the fires of hell, as He saturated His soul with the torments and the agonies of the damned to become bread that might be broken and fed to us. And, we feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And, He invites you tonight, as we come to the table, to feed upon Him. “Bread of heaven, feed me ’til I want no more” (author unknown) . Jesus—listen—He is spiritual bread. Jesus is supernatural bread. He came down from heaven.

C. Jesus Is Satisfying Bread

And, Jesus is satisfying bread. I love this. Look, if you will, in verse 35 of this same chapter: “*Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* (John 6:35) Men all around are searching for satisfaction, and they have one thing and then they want another. But, the true satisfaction—the thing that your heart yearns for, the thing that your soul yearns for—is satisfaction in Jesus.

I was thinking about it in my study a little while back, and I thought of all the religions of the world—Shintoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Confusionism, and all the rest—and I thought, “You know, I am so glad I know Jesus.” You know, what

would it be like? How would you like to be in one of these other religions? Isn't Jesus wonderful? Jesus alone satisfies the hunger of the human heart. God made a bird to fly, a fish to swim, and He made you to know Him and to love Him. And, He says, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*" (Matthew 5:6)—that is, they shall be satisfied (Matthew 5 and verse 6). In Psalm 107 and verse 9: "*For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*" (Psalm 107:9) This is God's guarantee: if you hunger and thirst, He'll fill you. Look, I don't know how much of God you have, but I'll tell you this much—listen to me: you have all you want. If you don't have any more, it's because you don't want any more. Now, don't get the idea that you're the hero and God's the tyrant: "Mean ol' God—if I could only persuade Him to fill me." No! It's not your job to persuade Him to fill you but to permit Him to fill you. "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*" (Matthew 5:6) Either that's true, or Jesus told a lie.

Now, what is your hunger? Jesus is spiritual bread. Jesus is supernatural bread. Jesus is satisfying bread. The problem with many people is we're so stuffed full of bread of this world we don't have any spiritual appetite. You know, if a man doesn't have an appetite, three things: number one, he's already stuffed full of something else; number two, he's sick; number three, he's dead. Now, ask yourself this question: Do you have an appetite? Are you hungry for the Lord Jesus?

D. Jesus Is Sustaining Bread

Now, not only is Jesus spiritual bread, supernatural bread, satisfying bread, but Jesus is sustaining bread. Look, if you will now, in verse 47: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*" (John 6:47–51) When we take the Lord's Supper, that's what we're symbolizing right now—feeding upon the broken body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that sustains for everlasting life.

I'm from Florida. The Spaniard Ponce de Leon came to Florida near where I went—and Jim, where you went to the university—the Ponce de Leon Springs, looking for the fountain of youth. He never found it. But, I'm telling you, if there were some fountain that you could drink and would restore your youth—let's say would extend your life for fifty years with the bloom of health on you; if you could get a pharmaceutical company that could do that, friend, I'll tell you what; if there were an elixir, a medicine, a drink, a

potion, a pill for that, that would extend life for fifty years in perfect health, men not only would pay for it; they'd kill for it. That's the truth. They would kill for it if there were no other way to get it. Jesus said, "Look, you feed upon me. I will give to you everlasting life." (John 6:51) Jesus is sustaining life. Now, He said, "[I've] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly." (John 10:10)

Conclusion

I'm finished, but look again in verse 51 of this chapter. Here's a good question: What good is bread if it's not eaten? Jesus said, "*I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man [shall] eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.*" (John 6:51) There were some that day that did not have an appetite. There were some that day that turned and walked away. Jesus had to turn to His disciples and say, "*Will [you] also go away?*" (John 6:67) Thank God for what Simon Peter said. He said, "*To whom shall we go?*" (John 6:68)—"You alone have the bread of life."

I leave you with this thought as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper: there's no problem too big for God to solve; there's no person too small for God to use; there's no spiritual hunger too deep for Jesus to satisfy. He is heaven's bread.

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Despair

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 2, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 6:15–21

“So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.”

JOHN 6:19–20

Outline

Introduction

- I. I Am Governed by His Providence
- II. I Am Growing by His Plan
- III. I Am Graced by His Prayers
- IV. I Am Gladdened by His Presence
- V. I Am Guarded by His Power
- VI. I Am Guided by His Purpose

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding John chapter six, please—the Word of God. If you did not bring a Bible with you, there is most likely is one there in the pew before you. Find John chapter six. When you've found it, look up here and let me tell you what I want to do this morning. I want to introduce you to an old friend that you've known for a long time. But you didn't know he was a friend. Now, what is a friend? Well, a friend is somebody that makes you a better person. Isn't that what a friend is?

The Bible says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” What that means is this: that a true friend will put an edge on your life. A true friend will make you a sharper person. Now, my friends do that for me—my best friends do. Sometimes, a friend will love you so much that he will even hurt you in order to help you. The Bible says, in the book of Proverbs, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceit.”

How would you like to have a friend—a friend that would help you to live a clean life? How would you like to have a friend that would draw you closer to Jesus? How would

you like to have a friend that would give you more strength? How would you like to have a friend that would help you to win your loved ones to Jesus Christ? How would you like to have a friend that would make a mature believer in the Lord Jesus? Well, you already have that friend, and his name is trouble. Trouble—that's the name of this strange friend. That's what we're going to be talking about today.

Look, if you will, in John chapter six. This is a time when the disciples got in trouble. In verse 15, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

Many times, it's been my privilege, brother Marty, to visit the land of Israel, and I'm happy to know that you've just returned from this land—and what a glorious place that is. But I suppose my favorite place in the land of Israel is by the shore of Galilee. And my favorite time in Israel is the evening time by the shore of Galilee. There's a little hotel that I enjoy, sitting out back on the little wharf that goes out into the Sea of Galilee, and watching the sun as it reflects there while it is setting on the Golan Heights. To see the birds fly over that sea, to feel the gentle breeze, it's so tranquil. It is so wonderful. It is so beautiful. It's almost intoxicating to sit there and see that Sea of Galilee. The old Rabbis used to say that God made all of the other bodies of water, all of the other seas, and then He made Galilee just for Himself, to be a thing of beauty, and a thing of enjoyment. Now, I thought of that when I read this scripture, because the Bible says it was evening time at Galilee when this took place, that I am about to tell you. It was the eventide; it was the twilight and that most beautiful tranquil time. Jesus had just fed the five thousand. The crowds were clambering after Him because of the miracles that He had done. They wanted to make Him a king. But He had no interest in being that kind of a king, so Jesus withdrew Himself up to a mountain to pray, to get away from the clambering miracle-mongers. And He sent the disciples down to the sea to go across the Sea of Galilee. And I can just see that scene. I envision the moon there in the beautiful sky, like a gardenia pinned on the lapel of the night. I can feel the gentle breeze as it kissed their cheeks, like the kiss of a baby. And these are seasoned sailors, and there they set sail because our Lord has told them. As a matter of fact, He has constrained them to do what they're about to do. Little aware that any trouble is coming, but they are sailing into the teeth of a storm. And the Bible says, "suddenly the wind

arose.” Have you ever been there? Everything seems to be wonderful; everything seems to be beautiful. You’re sailing along, you’re like the disciples were that night—they were so full of joy and peace. They’d seen their master feed five thousand. They were filled with the sense of exhilaration and power. After all, they were following Him, and He was a miracle worker. Besides that, they’d eaten and they were filled with bread and fish. And then, it happened: the winds become boisterous, and greedy waves reached up to pull them down to devour them, and water now is filling the boat. Now, the wind is contrary; the moon is hidden. It is dark. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches that it’s the darkest hour of the night. And they’re rowing, and their backs are aching. Their hands are paralyzed with fear, but they can’t stop rowing. They’re right out in the middle of the sea. They rowed for two or three miles against that gale. They can’t go back, and it’s difficult to go forward. It’s too far to swim to the shore. And the shoreline is lost in the inky blackness, and they’re filled with despair. They’re going to find out that Jesus is God’s answer to man’s despair.

Maybe you’ve been there. Maybe you’re not there. Maybe everything is fine for you. Maybe it is smooth sailing for you right now. If so, just wait—just wait. I mean, you, sooner or later, you’re going to find the winds are going to begin to blow, and things are going to seem to reverse on you. If you’re having smooth sailing now, I’m grateful. I want you to enjoy it. But I want to give you six anchors that’ll help you to ride out the storm. When the storm comes, there are six things I want you to be able to say, to find out that Jesus is God’s answer to man’s despair. These are six anchors of the soul—wonderful, wonderful lessons that we get from this passage of Scripture.

I. I Am Governed by His Providence

The first thing you need to say, when you find yourself in a storm, is this: I am governed by His providence. Write it down: I am governed by His providence. This storm did not take the wave walker, the Lord Jesus, by surprise. Are you telling me the One who had the power to still the waves and walk on water was surprised that this storm came up? As a matter of fact, the Bible says He’s the one that commandeth and raiseth stormy seas. He’s the one who created Galilee so long ago. And Bible tells us, over in Matthew chapter fourteen, verse twenty-two, “He constrained His disciples.” He constrained them to go and get in the ship. They were not there because they were out of the will of God. They were there because they were in the will of God. And, perhaps, you’re right now in the eye of the storm—that’s right now. It looks like your little boat is sinking. Right now, the icy water is reaching up for you. Right now, it’s so dark you cannot see your hand before your face. Right now, every wind seems to be contrary to you. I want to tell you something, friend, there is nothing that comes to you that He does not cause or allow. One way or the other, His providence is there. Not a drop of water in the Sea of Galilee

was there without His permission. So, put it down: first of all, I am governed by His providence. Whether I can see it, whether I can understand it or not, it is a fact that God has not relinquished His rule upon His universe.

II. I Am Growing by His Plan

Second anchor of the soul: I am growing by His plan. I am governed by His providence. I am growing by His plan. What is God's plan for you? God wants to enlarge you, not indulge you. God is not nearly so interested in making you happy and healthy, as He is holy. And so, God will put you into trouble. The Lord Jesus engineered these problems for His disciples, because He wants to develop us. Psalms chapter four, verse one, the Psalmist has said this: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." Now, you think about that: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." Think about the times when you have grown the most. When have been those times when you have developed and been enlarged spiritually? It's when your friend, trouble, came along—your old pal named trouble. And that's when you've been stretched, and that's when you've been enlarged. We all enjoy not having trouble, but, folks, I want to tell you, and I can give this testimony, that I have grown the most in my own life in times of deepest despair. I know that, when Joyce and I had a little baby boy to step over into heaven, we grew a quantum leap in that period of time. I know when I had a daughter to go through deep, deep heartache and distress, God stretched my heart, my life. I would never want it to happen again; but it did happen. And I'm here to tell you that I'm a better person because of it. And many of us can think of the storms we have gone through.

*I walked a mile with pleasure; she chatted all the way,
but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say.*

*I walked a mile with sorrow, and not a word said she,
but oh, the things I learned from sorrow, when sorrow walked with me.*

Isn't that true? "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." Fate, like film, is developed best in the dark. I don't know why it is, but that is true. These are the things that will enlarge us. Remember when Joshua and Caleb were sent out to spy out the land of Israel and there were twelve spies that were sent out and ten came back and gave a bad report? They said, well, it's a land filled with milk and honey, corn and oil, and wine and pomegranate and grapes. It's wonderful hills and valleys, and you can dig iron out of those hills. Rivers, mountains, beautiful fertile plains. But there are giants in the land. The sons of Anak—they're called Anakim—these Anakim, these are terrible giants. We can't go into that land, because, if we do, we'll go into war, and, well, they're so big we felt like grasshoppers. And Caleb said—and I love what Caleb said—Caleb said, in Numbers fourteen, verse nine: "Rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us." Bread, not bred. Not that they were

created for us, but bread. They're food for us. They're bread for us. Now, what did he mean by that? What happens when you eat bread? You strengthen yourself, you grow. Now, what Caleb said is, these difficulties are there to make us grow. They are bread for us. We can do it. You will never grow until you eat the bread that God sets before you, and often it is trouble. Anakim are the breakfast of champions. To grow, you have to have difficulty.

III. I Am Graced by His Prayers

So, first thing: I'm governed by His providence. Number two: I am growing by His plan. Number three: I am graced by His prayers. What was the Lord Jesus doing up on that mountaintop? When the Lord Jesus sent them down to the sea and He went up to the mountain, do you know what He had right there? He had a vantage. He saw the whole thing. He saw them rowing. He saw the clouds as they begin to rage and boil. He saw the sea as the waves begin to rise. He saw it all. And what was He doing up there? He was praying. He was praying. They may not have known that He had His eye upon them, but He did. Put in your margin Mark chapter six, verse forty-seven: "And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he—Jesus—alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing"—"He saw them toiling and rowing." They didn't see Him; He saw them. And He never took His eye off of them. And what was He doing there on that mountain? He was praying for them. He was interceding for them. Are you in the midst of a storm? You can say, His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. He's watching over you, and He is praying for you. The Bible says, in Hebrews chapter seven and verse twenty-five, "Wherefore he is able also to save unto the uttermost them come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Sometimes people will say to me casually and almost carelessly, almost sometimes flippantly, Put me on your prayer list. And I don't say it out loud, but sometimes I think, fat chance. You say, you're so hard-hearted. No, I'm not. You can't pray for everybody. You can't pray for everything. If you try to pray for everybody and everything, your prayer list will become a stagnant swamp rather than a controlled river. God will lay prayer burdens upon you heart, and God will tell you who to pray for. Oh, I pray generally for a person, but, friend, when somebody tells me that they pray for me every day, tears generally pop to my eyes. I think there are almost six billion people on the face of this earth; if somebody is praying for you, you're blessed. You're blessed, if somebody is praying for you. And I am blessed that people pray for me, and don't think I don't pray for others. I pray for a lot of people, as I have already this morning.

You don't understand what I'm saying. I'm just simply saying this: that if you're on somebody's prayer list, you're blessed. But now, you listen to me. You are on Jesus' prayer list. You—He knows you. The very hairs of your head are numbered. You're not

an incident; you're not accident. He doesn't love us all; He loves us each. He was watching them right in the eye of the storm. He was there. They couldn't see Him, but He could see them.

IV. I Am Gladdened by His Presence

I am governed by His providence. I am growing by His plan. I am graced by His prayers. I'll tell you another thing: when I'm in the storm, I am gladdened by His presence. Write it down: I am gladdened by His presence.

Look, if you will, in verse seventeen—the Bible says, “And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.” But then, down to verse 20: “But he saith unto them, It is I”—here I am—“be not afraid.” Now, it's the fourth hour when Jesus does this. The fourth hour is the hour between three and six AM. It's the darkest hour of the night. And in the darkest hour, Jesus came. Question: why did He not come sooner? Was He cruel? Was He just wanting them to suffer? I can imagine them there with their backs aching, looking into the mouth of a watery grave there, asking, where's Jesus? Where is Jesus? If He could feed five thousand, where is Jesus? He had His eye on them all the time. He was praying for them all of the time. He had not forgotten them.

You know, the problem was not that He had forgotten them; they had forgotten Him, in the real sense of the word. By the way, just put in your margin here again Mark chapter six, verses fifty-one and fifty-two. Here's something almost humorous. The Bible says—it gives the same story: “And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.” And now, listen to verse fifty-two: “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.” Remember when He fed the five thousand, what was the miracle of the loaves? He fed five thousand. Now here they are, they've seen Him feed the five thousand, and how many baskets full were left over? How many? Twelve. So here's every disciple with a basket of bread right at his feet. I mean, there right between his feet. Here is a basket of bread, one basket for every disciple. And the Bible says they forgot all about it. They forgot the miracle of the loaves.

That's the reason, friend, you need more than miracles to live on. You need Jesus—you need Jesus. How easily we forget miracles, and here they are saying again, give us another miracle—give us another miracle. But what they needed was not a miracle; they needed the miracle worker, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Now, He waited for a while before He came to them. He waited, because He came to them strategically at exactly the right time. The Bible says, in Isaiah chapter thirty and verse eighteen, “Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you.” I could not help but think of the song that you sang, Brother Marty, just before I preached, about waiting on the Lord, and

crying to God out of the depths. That's what we need to learn to do. Many times, the Lord will deliberately delay, that He may be gracious to us. When Lazarus died, they sent for Jesus, and the Bible tells us, rather than Jesus coming immediately at their request and behest, that Jesus demurred. He waited. He held back, until Lazarus was dead. And if you read John eleven—we'll get to it in a little while when we're preaching on these miracles—He said this: Lazarus is dead, and I'm glad. What? That's what He said—Lazarus is dead, and I'm glad. Because He had something greater. Suppose the Lord had come, when Mary had pouted, and Martha had rebuked Him. Why did you wait? Suppose He'd come sooner, and laid His hand upon the fevered brow of Lazarus, and healed Lazarus. Well, just one more person that Jesus healed. Some people would have said, you know, He might have gotten better anyway. I mean, after all, even you know people get better sometime. How do we know it was a miracle? I'll tell you one thing: when He raises the dead, they don't say it might happen anyway. Isn't that right? You see, He had a plan. And that plan was the greater glory. God waited four thousand years before He sent the Lord Jesus Christ into this world, after He made that promise—four thousand years, forty centuries; but the Bible says He came in the fullness of time. Never late, never ahead of time, never in a hurry.

Put this verse down—Habakkuk two and verse three—and it's a great verse for you if you're in trouble: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it"—wait for it. And so, I'm gladdened by His presence. He will come to me, and His eye's upon me as He prays for me.

V. I Am Guarded by His Power

Here's the fifth anchor of the soul that I want you to write it down: when I'm in trouble, I am guarded by His power. Look, if you will, in verse twenty: "But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid." I don't know who first said this, but I one hundred percent agree with it. The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you. The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you. That's everlastingly true. Now, Jesus had said to these disciples, go over to the other side. He said, go over. He did not say go under. He had a plan for them. And so, they see Him when all of these waves, here He comes walking on the water. You know, I if I could have been there in the days of His flesh, many times I would liked to have seen Him, sut if I just had my choice, I would choose this one. I can just see that kingly form, with the wind in His hair, putting His footsteps on the sea, His garments billowing back, smiling at the storm. Wouldn't you love to see Jesus walking on the water? And so, here He comes. At first, they say, what is that? Who is that? They begin to draw back in terror. They think it's a phantom, a ghost. They don't know what it is. But soon, the terror is turned to joy, because they hear Him say, It is I; be not afraid. But now, let me tell you something.

What He literally said is, don't be afraid; I am. That's exactly what He said. I am—not I am afraid—I am, I am. What He used was the name for Jehovah, the most sacred name to the Jews. When Moses said, who shall I say sent me when I tell Pharaoh to let my people go? Jehovah said, you tell them I am sent you.

Yesterday, He wasn't I was; He was I am. Today, He is I am, and tomorrow He is not I will be tomorrow; He is I am. He is I am. I am. I am. Never was a time when I was not. I am the great eternal God, and I was when this pond wasn't even a vapor. Don't be afraid. I am. I am guarded by His power. What is I am? It is a declaration, a proclamation of presence, a promise of abundance. He is the I am in the midst of your storm. Now, why did He walk on the water? Was this theatrics? Oh no, no. Was He just saying, look at me; I can walk on water? No, there's a message in the miracle, a significance in the sign, something that goes beyond the miracle, something for your heart today when you're in trouble—and what is it? Listen. When they saw Him walking on the water, what was their biggest problem? That water. What He was saying to them was this: what looks like is going to be over your head, is already under My feet. Did you get it? What you think is going to be over your head is already under My feet. Don't forget that. Jesus said, in this world you will have tribulation. Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. We're overcomers in the Lord Jesus Christ. You've got problems; you've got heartaches; you've got fears and tears. You are guarded by His power. You are. He is to you the great I am.

I wish I had more time to finish that, but I am is an unfinished sentence. I am what? You fill in the blank. I am the bread of life. I am the water of life. I am the door. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the great. I am in the midst of your storm.

VI. I Am Guided by His Purpose

And here's the last and final anchor of the soul I want to give you this morning: not only am I guarded by His power, but I am guided by His purpose—I'm guided by his purpose. Look up here, and let me tell you something. God has not promised you smooth sailing; He has promised you a safe landing. He said, go over to the other side. Now, look, if you will, in verse twenty-one: "Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." There were two miracles—actually three. He suspends the law of gravity, but also overrules the laws of time and space. Just like that, they're there. I mean, here they are rowing, their backs aching, their brows mingled with perspiration and sea water. When Jesus comes aboard, immediately, there they are at the shore. What does that mean? It means He has a purpose. You can bank on it—no pun intended—He'll see you to the shore. Well, maybe there was a pun intended—I have to apologize. Now, Andrew Murray said this: God is willing to assume the full responsibility for the life totally yielded to Him. God is

willing to assume the full responsibility for the life totally surrendered to Him. And He brought them to the destination.

Conclusion

You may have trouble, you may have tears and heartaches, but I'm going to promise you something on the authority of the Word of God. You are predestined to be like Jesus. And "all things will work together for good to those who love Him, who are the called according to His purpose." One of these days—one of these days—your destiny will be fulfilled. For the Bible says, in Philippians 1:6, "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it." And let me tell you something, folks: if you're in trouble right now, His eye's on you. He's praying for you. He will come to you, and I can promise you this: He is going to see you through. Did you hear me? You say, Adrian, who are you to promise? I'm not promising. I'm repeating a promise. He said, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee." He will see you through. And, one of these days, soon and very soon, He is going to step down from the mountain of His glory. And then, walking on water will be like child's play, because He'll be stepping on the clouds. And He's coming to us. As the barometer is falling, and the winds are whipping, and the storms are coming, and we say, what is the world coming to? It's coming to Jesus, because Jesus is coming to this world. And He's going to step out of the glory, with the rainbow wrapped around His shoulders, and with victory on His face as the great I am. And the trumpet will sound. And our little ship will leave the sea of time. And, immediately, we'll be on the shores of eternity. When He comes—when He comes. He is the great I am. What a Savior!

Bow your heads in prayer. Lord Jesus, thank You that Your providence allows us trouble and heartache, but that You never take Your eyes off of us. And, Lord, You come to us in the darkest hour, that You see us through. You always have, and You always will.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, you need Jesus—you need Jesus. He is God's answer to your despair and every other need that you'll ever have. And I want to help you to invite Him into your heart and into your life right now. Would you pray a prayer like this: Dear God—just pray it from your heart, silently, but fervently. Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust in you. I do trust in you, Lord Jesus. This very moment, come into my heart. Pray that, friend: come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. And begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, because you died for me, I will live for you. And, help me, Lord Jesus, never to be ashamed of you. Give me the strength, the courage, this morning, to make it public. In your name I pray. Amen.

How to Find Peace in the Midst of Your Storm

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 27, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 6:16–21

Outline

Introduction

- I. I Am Governed by His Providence
- II. I Am Growing by His Plan
- III. I Am Graced by His Prayers
- IV. I Am Gladdened by His Presence
- V. I Am Guarded by His Power
 - A. A Proclamation of Presence
 - B. An Announcement of Abundance
- VI. I Am Guided by His Purpose

Conclusion

Introduction

Will you take God's Word and be finding John chapter 6. In a few moments, we're going to begin reading in verse 16. But we're going to be talking a little bit about troubles, heartaches, tears, disappointments: what we would call "the storms of life." We go to the doctor and we get a bad report, or we don't know what the next telephone call is going to bring.

Joyce and I were reading the Scripture, this morning, at breakfast, and read there, in the Book of Proverbs: *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27:1). None of us know what the next phone call will bring; for good or bad, we just don't know. There are storms that come to us.

Now the Lord here, in His ministry in Galilee, was with His disciples, and they were in a storm. And we're going to read about that, and then, we're going to learn some wonderful lessons about how to find peace—how you can find peace in the midst of your storm, because we all have storms.

Begin in verse 16: *"And when evening was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they*

see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near unto the boat; and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid—now, just underscore the last part of that phrase, there—“*be not afraid*” (John 6:16–20).

Did you know, some 365 times in the Bible—one time for every day of the year—God has told us not to be afraid. In one way or another, He said “be not afraid,” or “fear not.” 365 times He tells us not to be afraid. The devil is the *sinister minister of fear*; but our Lord tells us not to be afraid.

Now remember, they are in a storm. He says: “*It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the boat; and immediately the boat was at the land to which they went*” (John 6:20–21).

In our journeys to Israel—and, I’ve been to Israel many times—one of the most delightful times that I have is to sit at twilight on the shores of Galilee. It’s almost mesmerizing. It’s almost like a dream, the tranquility. You’re almost intoxicated by the beauty, as the sun sets over the Sea of Galilee, and the Golan Heights, across the sea from Tiberius, turn a rosy color. You sit there. You can hear the birds nesting in the trees. I believe that the Sea of Galilee is one of the most beautiful bodies of water on this Earth. The old rabbis used to say that when God created all the other seas, then He created Galilee just for Himself.

Now the background for this passage of Scripture: It had been a wonderful day. Now Jesus Christ had been with His disciples, teaching them, and He had performed miracles. He fed the five thousand. So the disciples were full. They were full of success. They were full of knowledge. They were full of self-confidence. And they were full of a banquet of fish and bread. And it was a wonderful evening, perhaps like the evening that I just described, when sometimes we sit there and bask in the beauty. And perhaps, the moon was there, in the sky, snuggled like a gardenia on the lapel of the night. And a gentle breeze, soft as a baby’s breath, kissed their cheeks. And so these disciples, who are seasoned sailors, get in their boat and take sail to go to the other side of the sea, rejoicing in such a wonderful day. And then, it happened.

Then, it happened, just like that. The wind begins to rise. The clouds darken the moon and the stars, and an angry wind begins to beat the sea with its fist. And the water rises up and slaps these disciples in the face. And the water that’s on the outside of the boat begins to come on the inside of the boat and fill the boat. And they’re now out there, in the middle of the sea. And it’s dark, and the wind is contrary to them, and they can’t even see their hand before their face. And that Sea of Galilee that had been as quiet as a mill pond, now, has become a dangerous deathtrap. And these seasoned sailors are filled with fear. They bend their backs to the oars. It’s too far from the shore to swim. The waves are too boisterous. They have an idea that they are going down.

And on top of all of this, where is Jesus? Why hasn't He come to them? Why has He forsaken them? And then, they see Him. He's walking on the water. That doesn't bring them joy. Now their fear has turned to raw terror. Who? What is that walking on the water? Is it a phantom? Is it a ghost? And then, they recognize—it's Jesus, the wave walker, walking on the water. And He speaks to them, and He says, "Don't be afraid." In another Gospel, He says, "*Be of good cheer; it is I*" (Matthew 14:27). And they receive Him into their boat. And when they do—watch this—immediately, they're on the shore.

Well, are you in a storm? You say, "No, Pastor, I'm not in a storm." Well, I'm glad for you. Enjoy the trip; enjoy the trip. Have a good time. Really, I'm serious. We're fools if we don't enjoy the good times of life. If you are not in a storm, right now, I am happy for you. Enjoy it. But wait a while; just wait a while. Sooner or later, you are going to find yourself in a storm.

The Spanish have a proverb: "There is no home without its hush." That just simply means that, sooner or later, we have storms. And I've learned as a pastor, that while there are many of us here, there's probably a heartache on every pew. Somewhere, sitting next to you, there is a heartache—somewhere. We have storms. We all have difficulties. If not now, later.

And so what I want to talk to you about is how to find peace in the midst of your storm. *Because, peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; peace is the addition of power to meet those problems.* That's God's peace.

So I want to give you six principles. Will you write them down?

I. I Am Governed by His Providence

Principle number one—here's what you can say when you are in a storm—number one: I am governed by His providence. What happened to these people that day was not happenstance. It was not a mistake. It was not something that should have been avoided. The storm did not take Jesus by surprise.

Now folks, if Jesus Christ can walk upon water, Jesus Christ can certainly read and forecast the weather. This thing was not incidental; it was providential. Put in your margin "Matthew chapter 14, and verse 22." The Bible says: "*And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a boat*" (Matthew 14:22). Now He said, "You must do it." It was Jesus who sent them into this storm. It may be that God has engineered your storm. I mean, God has engineered your storm. If He has not engineered it—listen—if He has not engineered it, He has certainly allowed it. Because, our God is over everything.

I was reading Psalm 107, verses 24 and 25: "*These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth*

up the waves thereof" (Psalm 107:24–25). It's God who is the Master of the winds and the waves. He's the One who causes storms to come.

You know, it is a shallow theology, a very shallow theology, that says that, if we're in the will of God, that we're just going to sail always smoothly on the sea of life. We'll have no sickness, no sorrow, no disappointment, no separation. There'll be no death in our family. There'll be no problems. And the *joy boys* get on television and say, "You just get right with God, and believe God, and send me an offering, and you'll never be sick; everything will be fine." And this is the gospel of cash and Cadillacs, tranquility. Friend, there's a Greek word for that and it's *baloney*. Baloney! No, no, no, no!

Listen. We are going to have difficulty. And the first thing that you can say when difficulty comes is that God's providence is over it all. I am governed by His providence. God's wonderful plan is in effect. We call that *the providence of God*. Now remember, Jesus constrained them to get into a storm. They were in this storm because of the providence of God.

II. I Am Growing by His Plan

Now here's the second thing that you can say: Number two: Not only am I governed by His providence, but I am growing by His plan. I am growing by His plan. Now God's plan is not to indulge you; God's plan is to enlarge you. Put in your margin "Psalm 4, verse 1": "*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress*" (Psalm 4:1).

I want to ask you a question: Those of you who have been on the trail for a while, when did you grow the most? When everything was fine, when you were smoothly sailing, or when the storm came? Did you not grow more in the storm, in distress, when you were crowded to Christ, and when you had to call upon Him?

You see, in the Bible there are *correcting storms* and there are *perfecting storms*. Now Jonah, who spent the night on a *foam blubber mattress* was in one of those *correcting storms*. I mean, he was in a storm because he was out of the will of God. He was running from God. And God sent a *correcting storm*.

But there are also *perfecting storms*. These disciples were not out of the will of God. Why were they in a storm? They were in a storm—don't miss this—they were in a storm because they were in the will of God. It was Jesus, Matthew tells us, that constrained them to get into that boat. They were in this storm because they were obeying Jesus.

Well, why would Jesus want them to be in a storm? Because, He wanted them to grow. I've often shared these words with you that someone wrote. I don't know who wrote them:

I walked a mile with pleasure, she chatted all the way,

But left me none the wiser, for all she had to say.
I walked a mile with sorrow, not a word said she;
But oh, the things I learned from sorrow, when sorrow walked with me.

Is that not true? *“Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress”* (Psalm 4:1).
Somebody said that faith is like film: It’s developed in the dark. That’s when we learn to trust the Lord.

I was reading about the Israelites, when they were headed into the Promised Land, into the land of Canaan. And in the land of Canaan, there were some demon-possessed giants, and they were called Anakim—not Anacin, but Anakim. They gave headaches; they didn’t cure them. These were Anakim. And they were great giants.

And when the twelve spies went into the land to spy out the land, ten of the spies came back and said, “Hey, we can’t take this land. Why, it’s full of milk and honey and corn and wine and oil and pomegranates and figs and grapes. It is a land of hills and valleys. But there are giants in that land, and we can’t take that land.

But two of the spies said, in Numbers chapter 14, and verse 9: *“Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land”*—now listen to this—*“for they are bread for us”*—not b-r-e-d, but b-r-e-a-d. *Bread*, like your toast this morning—*“they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not”* (Numbers 14:9). They said, “Look, these people are a piece of cake. They’re bread for us. Don’t be afraid of them.”

Why do you eat bread? For strength. You grow on bread. It’s bread that gives energy. It is bread that is the staff of life. What was God saying? These things that look like they are your problems are your food. Anakim is *the breakfast of champions*, not Wheaties.

Folks, it’s when you feed on these problems that you grow. You see, what our Lord was looking for was not *softies* as disciples. He wanted them to grow, and He enabled them to be in a storm that He might enlarge them. So remember that you’re governed by His providence, when you’re in a storm. He rules over all. And remember that you are growing by His plan. And it’s in the storm that you’re going to grow and become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. I Am Graced by His Prayers

But you say, “But Pastor, I just don’t have what it takes to grow when I’m in a storm.” True, you don’t. But here’s the third thing: I am graced by His prayers. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“And entered into a boat”*—notice here—*“And entered into a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to*

them” (John 6:17). They’re saying, “Where’s Jesus? Where’s Jesus? It’s dark and He hasn’t come. Why hasn’t He come?” Well, He’s doing something else. What is He doing? He’s praying. And He’s up on a mountaintop, praying. Put in your margin “Matthew 14,” because this story’s told in different ways in the different gospels. And the Bible says: “*And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain privately, to pray*” (Matthew 14:23).

Listen. Don’t think He has forsaken you just because you cannot see Him. When you’re in the storm, He may not be with you in bodily form, but He is very much aware of you. I love that song:

For His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me. (Civilla D. Martin)

Let me give you another verse from one of the other Gospels—in Mark chapter 6, beginning in verse 47: “*And when evening was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land*”—they’re in the sea; Jesus is on the shore. Now watch this—“*And he saw them toiling in rowing*” (Mark 6:47–48). He saw them.

Did you know that He sees you right now? You say, “He doesn’t know where I am. He doesn’t know this difficulty. Why is He so far away? Why am I in the storm and He on the shore?” Friend, He is there, praying for you. He went apart to a mountain to pray. He’s up there on the mountain, looking down. He sees right through the dark. You can’t see Him; He sees us. And what’s He doing? He’s praying.

You want a blessed thought? Let me give you a blessed thought. You are on Jesus’ prayer list. You are on Jesus’ prayer list. There’s nothing much more comforting to me than for somebody to tell me that they pray for me.

I met a man in the airport here that I wasn’t even sure he knew my name, not very long ago. But I went up to meet him, and because he’s a wonderful Bible teacher, he looked at me and embraced me, and said, “Adrian, I prayed for you, this morning.” I mean, it was just by happenstance. He said, “Adrian, I prayed for you, this morning.” I said, “That’s wonderful.” Then you know what he said to me? He said, “I pray for you every day. Every day.” That moved me greatly.

Folks, there are almost 6 billion people on this Earth. Some people have never been prayed for one time. If you’re on anybody’s prayer list, you’re blessed. You’re blessed. But I can tell you: You’re on His prayer list. The Lord Jesus knows you by name, and He calls you by name. And the Bible says that He ever lives to make intercession for us. 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*” (Hebrews 7:25). Did you come to God by Jesus? Then you’re on His prayer list. And what is He doing? *The finished work of Jesus is Calvary. The unfinished work of Jesus is His*

prayer ministry.

Listen. I am governed by His providence. I am growing by His plans. I am graced by His prayers. He was praying for them in the midst of their storm. Do you have any reason to doubt that He is praying for you in the midst of your storm? How would you feel if you knew, while you're in your bedroom, that right out there in your living room, Jesus was on His knees praying for you? Is it any less real that you're in the boat, and He's on the shore? Or you're here on this Earth, and He's in glory, praying for you? He ever lives to make intercession for you.

IV. I Am Gladdened by His Presence

Now here's the fourth thing I want you to learn in the midst of your storm: Not only am I graced by His prayers, but I am gladdened by His presence. He will come. Look, if you will, in verse 20: *"But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid"* (John 6:20). And in Matthew, He tells them to be of good cheer. Matthew 14, verse 27: *"But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid"* (Matthew 4:27).

I can see these disciples, as perspiration is on their brow, and their face is a network of fear. Their clammy hands hold to those oars, and their backs are aching, and they're pulling. Peter says, "Pull harder. We're going to sink." And old doubting Thomas says, "I don't believe we're going to make it. We're going down." And then, they see Jesus.

Question: Why didn't He come sooner? Why did He wait? You know, He's been there for a long time. If you will read the story, you're going to find out that they had been out there on the sea for six agonizing hours. They're out there pulling, and now it's the darkest hour of the night. Mark tells us that Jesus came in the fourth watch of the night (Mark 6:48). That's between 3 and 6 a.m., the darkest hour. For six long, agonizing hours they're out there, and it seems that He has forgotten them. It wasn't Jesus who had forgotten. Really, it was the disciples that had forgotten.

You know, Jesus had just done a miracle. If you'll read this story, in the sixth chapter of John, you'll find out that Jesus had fed five thousand. Notice, if you will, in verse 12: *"When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore, they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments"* (John 6:12–13). Now why did they fill twelve baskets? How many disciples? Twelve disciples. All right. He says, "Now take everything, take the fragments that remain." Every disciple has a basket of bread sitting right at his feed. In that boat is a basket of bread. He's just done a miracle, and now here they are filled with fear.

Now they're thinking: "Why has Jesus forgotten us?" They'd forgotten Jesus. They had forgotten what He had already done. Aren't we prone to do that? I mean, how many times our Lord has delivered us, how many times our God has performed miracles for

us. But we have forgotten. And what they should have done was just remember what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 18: *“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

But our Lord waited. Why did He wait? Well, His wait, His delay, before He did come to them, was strategic, and it was deliberate. Would you write this verse down: *“Isaiah chapter 30, and verse 18”*: *“And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you”* (Isaiah 30:18). Isn't that a great verse? *“And therefore will the LORD wait,”*—not that He might be cruel to you—*“that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted”*—now, God is in the business of getting glory to Himself—*“that he may have mercy upon you; for the LORD is a God of justice”*—that means *discernment*. He knows not what you want; He knows what you need. And then, it says—*“blessed are all they that wait for him”* (Isaiah 30:18). God waits. You need to wait. And you know what God is waiting on? God is waiting for you to wait on Him. God is waiting upon you to wait on Him.

Have you ever thought about the deliberate delays of the Lord? I was reading in John chapter 11, when Lazarus died. And Mary and Martha, who loved Jesus, and knew that Jesus loved Lazarus, sent for Jesus. They were there in Bethany. And they sent for Jesus and told him, *“Look, the one that You love is sick.”* And I picked it up and read it again this morning. The Bible says, *“And Jesus waited two days”*—two days before He ever did anything, before He ever even started to come (John 11:6).

Now suppose, Brother Bob, that you get a message that Buna, for example, is sick. And you're somewhere, and you just say, *“Well, I just believe I'll stay around two more days.”* That would seem so cruel not to come. And of course, you should come and I would come. But Jesus waits two days. And by the time He gets there, four days have passed. And Jesus says, *“Lazarus is dead. And I am glad”* (John 11:14-15).

Now wait a minute. But that's what He said. Because, Jesus had a plan, there. He's going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Question: Suppose Jesus had come right away and healed Lazarus? Certainly He could have healed him, if He raised him from the dead: no *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about that. We know He could have healed him, but He didn't.

Well, had He healed Lazarus, you know what someone may have said? *“Well, you know, he might have gotten well anyway. I mean, how do we really know that it was Jesus that did that? Maybe he would have gotten well anyway.”* But there's no explaining away the miracle, when He raised him from the dead.

You see? He had a plan. And the plan did not make sense to Martha; she scolded Him. It did not make sense to Mary; she pouted. But it made sense to the Lord Jesus. *“Therefore will the LORD wait”* (Isaiah 30:18). The Lord gave a promise in the Garden of

Eden that He was going to send a Messiah—Genesis 3:15—but He waited four thousand years. Four thousand years. Did you hear that? Four thousand years. The Bible says, “In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4). In the fullness of time.

You know, many times, we’re trying to pick God’s blessings before they’re ripe. *“Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you ... blessed are all they that wait for him”* (Isaiah 30:18).

God is developing patience. God is never in a hurry, but He is never late. Habakkuk 2, verse 3, says: *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie”* (Habakkuk 2:3). Many of us are waiting for Jesus to come. People say: *“Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation”* (2 Peter 3:4). You can put it down, big, plain, and straight: He is coming. He is coming. And He’s coming in God’s good time. But He’s coming. Our Lord is coming.

V. I Am Guarded by His Power

Next, you can say this in the midst of your storm: I am guarded by His power. I am guarded by His power. Notice what He says, in verse 20: *“It is I; be not afraid”* (John 6:20). I don’t know who first said this, but he said a mouthful when he said, “The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you.” That’s good. The will of God will never take you where the grace of God cannot keep you. That’s everlastingly true. You see? Jesus constrained them to get into a boat and to go over to the other side. You read that in the Word Of God. He said: “Go over to the other side” (Mark 6:45). He didn’t say, “Go under”; He said, “Go over.” God has a plan for you. Jesus did not lead these disciples into disaster. He said, “Go over.”

And when He comes to them, He says, “I am; be not afraid, be of good cheer. *I AM.*” Now “Be not afraid, *I AM.*” When He says the word *I AM*, what does He mean by *I AM*? Well, in verse 20—look at it: *“It is I”* (John 6:20). Do you see that in verse 20? Well, in the Greek, it just literally says, *“I AM.”* *“It is I”* is the way we read it in the King James; but it literally says, *“I AM.”* And *I AM* is the sacred name for deity. It means He is the Almighty, the Everlasting. It’s Him saying, “Look, *I AM* that *I AM* that *I AM.*” He is the great *I AM.* “I was in existence when this thing was not even a vapor, this Sea of Galilee. I am the great *I AM.*”

A. A Proclamation of Presence

So think about it. When He says, “*I AM,*” that’s a proclamation of presence, eternal presence. Not “I was, but maybe I no longer am.” Or, not “I will be, but maybe I’m not

yet.” No. He’s just that “*I AM that I AM that I AM that I AM.*” Hey, there never was a time when Jesus was not. Never will there be a time when He will not be. And friend, in the midst of your storm, just remember this: *I AM, I AM.* It’s a proclamation of presence.

B. An Announcement of Abundance

But I’ll tell you what else it is: Not only is it a proclamation of presence, it is an announcement of abundance. Did you know what *I AM* is? It’s an unfinished sentence. An unfinished sentence. *I AM...what?* Well, you fill in the blank. Just fill in the blank. Over and over again, in the Gospel of John, He’s saying, “*I AM,*” “*I AM,*” “*I AM.*” He says, “*I AM* the way.” Are you lost? Then fill in the sentence. He’s the way. Are you on the wrong side and want to get in? He says, “Okay, *I AM* the door.” Are you hungry? He says, “Okay, *I AM* the bread of life.” Are you stumbling in darkness? He says, “*I AM* the light of the world.” Are you dead in trespasses and sin? He says, “*I AM* the resurrection and the life.” “*I AM,*” “*I AM,*” “*I AM,*” “*I AM,*” “*I AM.*” And I’m going to tell you something, precious friend: He’s *I AM* for you. You can just fill in the blank.

I don’t know what your problem is, I don’t know what your need is; but I know your answer. And. His name is Jesus.

Jesus is all this world needs today;
Blindly they strive for sin darkens their way.
Oh, to pull back the grim curtains of night;
One look at Jesus and all will be light.

And my advice for you, in the midst of your storm, is to see Jesus, the great *I AM*, and see Him walking on the water. And what looked like it was going to be over their head was already under His feet. Under His feet. And *you’re seated in the heavenlies with Him. And you can’t drown with your head above water.* And friend, you’re seated in the *heavenlies* with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great *I AM*. And you can put it down: “I am guarded by His power.”

VI. I Am Guided by His Purpose

And last of all, write this down: You can say, “I am guided by His purpose.” Verse 21: “*Then they willingly received him into the boat; and immediately the boat was at the land to which they went*” (John 6:21). *God has not promised you smooth sailing; but He has promised you a safe landing.* Immediately, they were at the shore. Now you see, your destiny is already determined. Time and space are no impediment to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will see you to the shore.

Andrew Murray said this, and it's another great statement: "God is willing to assume the full responsibility for the life that is totally yielded to Him." God is willing to assume the full responsibility for the life that is totally yielded to Him. Now they were having tribulation, but Jesus said, "*Be of good cheer*" (Matthew 14:27). "*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). You see? That storm just represented the world. Where is Jesus? Jesus has overcome the world. That's what He's telling you. That's what He's telling me.

Conclusion

Now folks, let's make another application, and then, we're going to wrap this up. The spiritual barometer is falling, and all of us who can read the signs of the times, we know there's a storm gathering. There's a storm gathering. Sometimes, it's calmest just before the storm. I learned that in Florida. When they say a hurricane's coming, you walk outside and you say, "No way." But yet, the barometer is falling, and you know that it's coming. The Bible tells us that.

But folks, soon our Lord, who has been on the mountain of His glory, praying for us, is going to rise from His throne. And then, walking on the water will be child's play. He'll come, stepping on the clouds. He'll come in His glory. And those of us who are here, on the sea of time, will immediately be on the shores of eternity, just like that, when He comes. Won't that be a day? Won't that be a day?

The Bible says it happened, when they received Him into the boat. Have you received Him? Have you? Have you trusted Him? Would you bow your heads in prayer?

Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And if you need the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, why don't you receive Him into your boat, right now? Receive Him really into your heart, into your life—not merely to be with you, but to be inside of you by faith. Would you pray this prayer? "Dear God. I am a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved. 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, Jesus, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Come into my heart"—pray it, and mean it—"Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus"—did you ask Him? Then, thank Him. Pray this way—"Thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving me. I trust You to do it, right now, like a child; and that settles it. You're my Lord, my Master, my Savior, and my God. And now Lord Jesus, begin to make me the person You want me to be. And Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. Help me, so that I'll never be ashamed of You. And give me the courage to make it public, today, this morning. Help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

The Bread of Heaven

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 30, 1989

Main Scripture Text: John 6:25–35, 47–59, 63

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

JOHN 6:35

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Is Spiritual Bread
- II. Jesus Is Supernatural Bread
- III. Jesus Is Satisfying Bread
- IV. Jesus Is Sustaining Bread
- V. Jesus Is Sanctifying Bread

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and open to John chapter 6. We’re going to prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper tonight. And as we prepare for the Lord’s Supper, I remind you that the Lord’s Supper consists of two elements: the fruit of the vine (the grape juice), and the bread. When Jesus took that bread and broke it, He said, “This bread represents me; this bread is my body, which is broken for you.” (1 Corinthians 11:24) Tonight, therefore, I want us to think about that bread in an expanded way—a message that I want to call “The Bread of Heaven.”

John chapter 6 and verse 25—would you read that here: “*And when they had found him on the other side of the sea,*”—that is, when the crowds found Jesus on the other side of the Sea of Galilee—“*they said unto him, Rabbi,*”—the word *rabbi* means “teacher.” “Teacher, when did you come here?”—“*when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*” Now, what Jesus here is talking about is He had fed five thousand people, and after He fed five thousand people the crowds followed Him wherever He went. And Jesus said, “I know why you’re following me: because you had such a good lunch on those loaves and fishes.” But then, notice what the Lord Jesus said to them and to us tonight: “*Labour not for the meat which perisheth...*”—now, that’s what most of us are doing. I mean, most of us are

spending our time, our energy, our thought, our talents, and everything else to put food on the table. But Jesus said—“*Labour...for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*” (John 6:25–27) And then, skip on down to verse 35: “*And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*” (John 6:35)

Jesus Christ, among other things, has described Himself to us as bread. Now, that’s something we’re all familiar with. And He takes something from the natural world, and, being the master teacher that He was, He brings it over into the spiritual world and makes a tremendous application for us. Now as you think of Jesus being bread, would you think with me about five wonderful thoughts tonight before we take this bread into our bodies?

I. Jesus Is Spiritual Bread

The very first thing I want you to understand is the Lord Jesus Christ is spiritual bread. Notice verse 27. Jesus says, “*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.*” (John 6:27) Now, there are plenty of people who are interested in material bread; but the Lord Jesus said that kind of food will perish. I mean, dear friend, no matter how good it is, it’s only for a season. And no matter how many people you feed, still that bread is going to run out.

There are so many people who want the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop preaching the saving gospel and start preaching the social gospel. Did you know that? There are plenty of people who would like for us to stop what we’re doing in this pulpit and take the energy that we put into preaching the gospel and give that energy to feeding the poor. Now I’m not against feeding the poor. God knows we ought to help feed the poor—and we do. This church spends multiplied thousands of dollars every year to feed the poor. But, dear friend, we can never let that distract us from preaching the saving gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

There are about five billion people on the face of Planet Earth—about five billion. What does a Big Mac cost these days? How much? Two dollars and twenty cents. All right, let’s say we get a bargain and get a Big Mac for two bucks. All right, if there were five thousand people, and you bought every one of them a Big Mac—about five billion people and you bought every one a Big Mac—it would cost you ten billion dollars. You could spend it just like that. Three hours, they’d be hungry again. I mean, what difference does it make if people die with a full stomach, and go to hell? See, this is what Jesus is saying. He says there’s meat that perishes; and then He says there’s bread that lasts for everlasting life. (John 6:27)

And so the Lord Jesus Christ saw these people who came after Him, and He said,

“You didn’t seek me because of the miracles—that is, because I’m the Son of God—you sought me because of the bread.” (John 6:26) And when Jesus Christ started preaching to them about spiritual miracles, when the Lord Jesus started speaking to them about feeding on Him—eating His flesh, drinking His blood—they melted away like snowdrops in the August sun. They were not interested in that. He had to turn to His disciples and say, “*Will ye also go away?*” (John 6:67) So, that’s the first thing I want you to learn, friend: spiritual bread—Jesus is spiritual bread.

II. Jesus Is Supernatural Bread

Now, the second thing I want you to learn: Not only is He spiritual bread, but He is supernatural bread. Look in verse 30: “*They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?*” Now He just fed the five thousand, and these miracle mongers said, “Give us a sign.” And then here’s what they said: “*Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life.*” (John 6:30–35)

These people are saying to Jesus, “Hey, Jesus, do something. Give us another sign.” Signs never really satisfy. Don’t get the idea, if you could see signs and miracles, that you’d be a believer. You would not necessarily be a believer. And if you did, you might be a believer in the wrong thing, because the devil is able to do miracles. But so they’re saying, “Give us a sign. We remember that God gave Moses a sign. Moses gave those people manna in the wilderness.” (John 6:30–31) Jesus said, “That wasn’t Moses that gave you that manna. God gave you that manna.” (John 6:32) And then Jesus said, “That manna was only a picture of me” (John 6:35)

You see, everything in the Old Testament—all of those miracles in the Old Testament, all of those prophecies in the Old Testament, all of those types, all of those ceremonies, every bit of it—pointed to Jesus. If you read the Bible and you don’t see Jesus, you’d better go back and reread it. Every book has a hero, and Jesus is the hero of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus said, “*Search the scriptures; for...[these] are they which testify of me.*” (John 5:39)

Let me show you how that manna pictured the Lord Jesus. That manna came down from heaven. Jesus came down from heaven. That manna was white: it speaks of the purity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The manna was small: it speaks of the humility of the Lord Jesus Christ. The manna lay upon the ground: it speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The manna was round: that speaks of the eternity of the Lord

Jesus Christ. The manna was sweet: that speaks of the sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That manna had in it the taste of oil: that shows us that the Lord Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness—that the Holy Spirit, the anointing of God, was upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That manna had to be lifted up from the earth: it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself was raised from the dead. That manna had to be partaken of: it speaks of the Lord Jesus that we must receive. And that manna sustained them and gave them physical life, and it speaks of the Lord Jesus, who gives us eternal life.

And so Jesus is saying, “Look, I am that bread of life,” in verse 35; (John 6:35) “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” (John 6:51) The Lord Jesus is not just an ordinary person; He is supernatural bread. When He said, “*I am the bread of heaven,*” (John 6:35) that’s one of the great *I am*’s in the Gospel of John, where the Lord Jesus in the New Testament identifies Himself with the great I AM, Jehovah of the Old Testament.

III. Jesus Is Satisfying Bread

All right now, there’s a third thing I want you to think about Jesus before we take this bread into our bodies: Not only is the Lord Jesus Christ spiritual bread; not only is the Lord Jesus supernatural bread, bread that came down from heaven; but the Lord Jesus is satisfying bread. Notice in verse 35: “*And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*” (John 6:35) You have a hunger and you have a thirst that only Jesus can satisfy. Now the Lord is not saying here that you should not eat physical food. He’s not saying here that you should not drink physical drink. But He’s saying that will never satisfy you. God gave you a God-shaped vacuum. God gave you a hunger that Jesus alone can satisfy.

I want to tell you this about the Lord Jesus Christ—spiritually, I have wanted more than Jesus, but I can testify this: I have never wanted anything but Jesus. Amen? You think about it: I’ve wanted more of Him, but I’ve never wanted anything else but Him. He alone satisfies. And the older I get, the more I preach, the more I learn of Him, the more I learn that He alone satisfies the hungers of my heart.

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

—HARRY D. LOES

Jesus is satisfying bread. And I don’t care what else you do, what else you have, what else you attain: I can promise you, friend, that you’ll never be happy—you’ll never be satisfied—apart from Jesus. I’ll just guarantee it.

God made you to serve Him, just like He made a fish to swim through the sea and a bird to fly in the air. You take a bird out of the air and put him in the sea, he'll be an unhappy bird. You take a fish out of the sea and put him in a tree, he'll be an unhappy fish.

You see, you are made to serve God. It is *"in him we live, and move, and have our being."* (Acts 17:28) And your soul will never be satisfied apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Jesus Is Sustaining Bread

Now, there's something else before we take this bread I want you to think of. And this bread pictures the Lord Jesus. He is spiritual bread. He is supernatural bread. He is satisfying bread. And He is sustaining bread. Notice in verse 47: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* (John 6:47–51) You can eat other bread and you'll eventually die. But this bread, and this bread alone, is sustaining bread. To feed on the Lord Jesus Christ is to live forever.

In my home state of Florida we have a town not very far from where I went to college. It's called De Leon Springs. And it is said that it was founded and found by Ponce de León, that Spanish explorer who came to the shores of Florida looking for the fountain of youth. He had heard that somewhere in Florida there was a fountain that, if you would drink the water, would erase the wrinkles from your face and would make your hair as black as a raven's wing; it would put a spring back in your step and lift those sagging muscles. And he searched for that fountain, but he never found it. There's a great spring there, Ponce de Leon Springs. I've been there many times on vacations and holidays. I've even drunk of the water. But as you can see, it didn't work.

But I want to say to you, dear friend, there is a fountain where we may drink. There is bread of which we may eat. And it will not only satisfy; it will sustain. And Jesus said that through Him—through this bread—we will live forever. He says, *"The bread that I will give is my flesh [and] I give [it] for the life of the world."* (John 6:51)

Now Jesus said in John chapter 10, verse 10—it's very wonderful—He said, *"I am come that [you] might have life, and that [you] might have it...abundantly."* (John 10:10) You see, Jesus did not come that you might have existence. You already have that. "Oh," you say, "well, He came that we might have everlasting existence." No, you already have that: you will always exist. You already have that. Your soul will be in existence when the sun, the moon, and the stars have grown cold. There never will be a

time when you are not. There was a time when you were not, but there never will be time when you are not. You can't cease to exist. Jesus didn't say, "I've come that you might have everlasting existence." He said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) A lot of people exist, but they don't have life. You see, *not only does Jesus add years to your life; He adds life to your years.* That's what He means when He says, "You eat of this bread, you will live forever." (John 6:50) This bread is sustaining bread.

V. Jesus Is Sanctifying Bread

Now, one last thing I want us to think about before we take the Lord's Supper: This spiritual bread, which is supernatural bread, which is satisfying bread, which is sustaining bread, is also sanctifying bread. When we eat this bread, and when we drink this cup, we become more and more like the Lord Jesus. We are saved by the blood, but we're sanctified by the bread. Let me say that again: We're saved by His blood, but we're sanctified by the bread.

Now, continue to read in verse 53 of this same chapter: *"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you."* Boy, this is when many of them started to leave. They said, "That sounds like cannibalism." *"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed..."*—not just food, but food indeed. And then He's saying that—*"my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father:"*—that is, "You want to understand the secret of my life? The life of God is in me"—*"so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat in the manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum."* (John 6:53–59)

Now what He's saying is that you've got this bread. Even though this bread is supernatural bread, even though this bread is spiritual bread, even though this bread is satisfying bread, even though this bread is sustaining bread, even though this bread is sanctifying bread, hey, folks, it's not any good at all to you unless you do what? Unless you eat it. You must partake of this bread. Jesus said, "You must eat my flesh; you must drink my blood. You must partake of me." (John 6:53) That's what we do when we sit down at the table: We partake. And the Bible speaks in the New Testament of us partaking of Christ. Hebrews chapter 3, verse 14, says we're *"partakers of Christ."* (Hebrews 3:14) Second Peter 1, verse 4, says we are *"partakers of the divine nature."* (2 Peter 1:4)

Now, how do you therefore partake? I mean, literally, how do you feed upon Jesus? We all say, “All right, that sounds good. I want to feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. I really do, pastor. I want that strength that comes to my spiritual body just like bread gives strength to my physical body. How do I do it?” Well, I’m glad you asked. I want to tell you. All right now listen. These people were having difficulty because Jesus is using an analogy. Jesus is using an illustration, and their skulls are kind of thick. They can’t figure it out. They say, “How can we eat His flesh? How can we drink His blood?” They started to leave. But then Jesus clears it all up in verse 63. So, just fast-forward to verse 63, and Jesus says, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* (John 6:63) Jesus said, “I’m not talking about eating my physical flesh. I am not talking about drinking my physical blood.” Of course, that’s repugnant and grotesque. He says, “You want to eat my flesh? You want to drink my blood?”—*“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

Do you know how you feed on Jesus? You feed on the Word. Isn’t that simple? That’s simple. You see, this book is Christ encapsulated in truth—not the literal paper, not the ink; oh, no—the truth, the words that are here. A man and his word may be different, but not God and His Word. I’m not saying that the Bible is identical with Christ; I’m saying the Bible is inseparable from Christ. You cannot separate the Word of the Lord from the Lord of that Word. And Jesus said, “You eat me”; and then He says, “You feed on my word”—*“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

Suppose you were to say to me, “Pastor, I’m so weak I can hardly get out of bed. I can’t put one foot in front of another. My mind is muddled. I’m just having palpitations. I can hardly go.” I say, “Well, boy, you’re sick. Maybe you’ve got some horrible disease. Tell me about yourself. How’s your appetite?” “Well, I don’t know.” “Well, what have you been eating?” “Well, I just don’t eat anything.” “What?” “Well, I do eat a little bit on Sundays for about an hour on Sunday morning at 9:30, and then about another hour on Sunday night at 6:00, but that’s about all I eat, pastor.” “You mean you don’t eat anything else?” “No. And I’m just so weak I don’t know what to do.” I say, “Well, look. You don’t need to go see a doctor. I can tell you what to do. Stick your feet under the table and begin to eat.” Isn’t that right?

Now, you know, there are so many folks who say, “Well, I just don’t understand why I’m so weak in the spiritual life.” I know why you’re so weak: You’re suffering from malnutrition. Jesus said, “You must feed on me—feed on me.” He says, “Eat my flesh; drink my blood. Feed on me! Feed on me! I am the bread that cometh down from heaven. Feed on me!” And how are you going to feed on Him? You’d better get in this book, friend. You’d better get in the Word of God. I mean, there’s no other way. All I’m doing here when I preach is just to whet your appetite. I can’t feed you Sunday by

Sunday.

Listen to what Jesus said. Just put these verses in your margin. First of all, John 15:7. Jesus said, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* Now the Word can’t abide in you, dear friend, unless the Word gets into you. You’re going to have to feed on the Word. The reason that we’re weak in prayer is we’re malnourished. Listen to John 14:23: *“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”* You say, “God doesn’t seem to be real to me.” Are you feeding on the Word? Here’s the third verse—Mark 8:38: *“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”* Friend, there’s no way that you can say, “I’m proud of Jesus, but I’m ashamed of His Word.” Listen. You are going to have to treat this book with a reverence: the respect that you have for the Lord Jesus.

You know, when I say that, there are some people who say, “You’re worshiping the Bible—you’re worshiping the Bible.” That’s not true; that’s malarkey. We worship the Lord of the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ. But, friend, He puts being ashamed of Him right alongside of being ashamed of His Word. Listen. He is just simply saying that, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* Other books, you read them, friend. This book reads you. This book is alive. It pulsates with power. I mean, it is the Word of God. It is spirit; it is life. And get it into your heart. I’m telling you—I’m telling you—you’re not going to grow strong in the spiritual world, in the spiritual life, until you begin to feed on the Word of God.

Conclusion

Now as we take this bread into our bodies tonight, it only illustrates the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, *“This is my body, which is broken for you.”* (1 Corinthians 11:24) He is that bread that comes down from heaven. (John 6:50) But how are we truly, truly going to get Christ in His fullness and power into our lives? *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are”—what?—“life.”* (John 6:63) He is that bread of heaven. (John 6:51) I want you to think about that now tonight as we take the Lord’s Supper.

The Power in the Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 22, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 6:53–57

Outline

Introduction

I. We Must Appropriate the Constant Provision of the Blood

II. We Must Rely on the Cleansing Properties of the Blood

III. We Must Claim the Conquering Power of the Blood

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, take your Bibles. Find John chapter 6—would you, please—and look up here.

Some years ago, Billy Graham was preaching, as a young man—and you know God’s anointing and God’s power has been on Billy Graham for many, many years—and I read somewhere where a young professor from Cornell University said to Billy Graham, to the young Billy Graham, “Billy, you’re gifted. You have power. You have persuasion. But I want to give you some advice. If you expect to be used in a worldwide way, you’re going to have to leave out that blood stuff,” talking about the blood of Jesus. “Leave out the blood.” Billy Graham said, “I determined at that moment to preach more on the blood of Jesus Christ than ever before.” And thank God for that.

I want to talk to you today about the power in the blood. Would you turn to John chapter 6, beginning in verse 53, and read with me: “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Underscore that phrase, “life in you.” “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

Many Christians are failing in their Christian lives. They are miserable representations of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ declared and manifested the Father, but I wonder how many of us are declaring and manifesting Jesus Christ.

I’ve told you about a little boy, one time, who had a mangy, old mutt, a dog. Somebody asked him, said, “What kind of a dog is that dog?” The little boy said, “He’s a police dog.” The man said, “Well, he doesn’t look like a police dog.” And the little guy

said, “Well, he’s in the secret service.” I think I know a lot of Christians who are in the secret service. I mean, they may be saved, but you would never know it by looking at them the way they talk, the way they walk, the way they act, the way they live. They do not have that power that God wants them to have. The life of Jesus Christ is not in them. And the difference is they have never discovered the power of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me tell you several things about the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, friend, it is sacred blood. Now, what I mean by that is this: that while Jesus Christ had a human body, the blood that flowed through His veins was not like the blood of any other man, any other woman. His blood was sacred blood. This is the reason that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Did you know that the blood type is determined not by the mother, but by the father? Did you know that? That’s the reason why sometimes they can have a paternity suit and prove who may have fathered a particular child. Some people have the idea that the blood that’s in the baby’s life and the blood that’s in the mother’s life interchanged somehow and flow together. No, no. The mother may have one type, and the child may have another type of blood altogether. The blood type is not determined by the mother.

Whose blood was in the Lord Jesus Christ? He was the Son of God, and I’m telling you it was God’s blood that flowed through His veins. You say, “Now, wait a minute, Pastor, God doesn’t have blood.” He did when Jesus was here on this earth. Let me give you a verse of Scripture. It’s a wonderful verse. Put it in your margin—Acts chapter 20 and verse 28. Paul is talking to the pastors of the church at Ephesus, and here’s what he said: “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers—now listen to this statement—to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” That’s it. Who bought the church? God did. With whose blood? His own blood. I mean that the blood of God flowed through the veins of Jesus Christ. It is sacred blood.

Not only is it sacred blood; it is shed blood, for the Bible says, “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” And I say it was shed blood. It was not spilt; it was shed. Jesus said, “No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down; I have the power to take it up.” Jesus did not die as a martyr; Jesus died as a willing substitute. It was—that sacred blood was—shed blood. And because the sacred blood was shed blood, the sacred blood, the shed blood, becomes saving blood. We are saved by the blood of the lamb.

Way back in the Book of Leviticus—Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11—the Bible says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.” No

wonder the devil wants the blood message taken out of the church. And Peter in the New Testament said, in 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning in verse 18: “Forasmuch as ye know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, But with—listen—the precious—the precious—blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The sacred blood, the shed blood, is that saving blood. That’s why He had to be born of a virgin. Had He not been born of a virgin, He would have had the blood of Adam coursing through his veins. “In Adam all die; but in Christ shall all be made alive.” He came as He did—virgin-born—to be what He was—sinless—to do what He did—to die a substitute for us. He became man that we might become sons of God, by the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can sing it, say it, shout it, believe it: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

A Sunday School teacher asked a little girl, “Is there anything God cannot do?” She said, “Yes, there’s one thing God cannot do. God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.” For the Bible says, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

Now, we’ve known that, but here’s the fourth thing I want you to notice. That sacred blood, which is shed blood, which is saving blood, is also—listen to me—shared blood. Get it down: shared blood. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is talking to these people about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Look in verse 53: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” Now, folks, at that time when Jesus said that, they began to scatter, they began to leave, they got out of there. They said, “I don’t want anything to do with this.” They began to go here and there. They left Him, so much that Jesus had to go to say to His disciples, “Will you also go away?” What was it that so offended them when He said this that you had to eat His flesh and drink His blood? Well, over and over again, these Jews had been taught in the Old Testament, you don’t drink blood; you don’t eat blood.

Put these scriptures down. You can understand why they left. Genesis 9, verse 4—God says, “But the flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, ye shall not eat.” And Jesus here is talking here about drinking blood. You can wonder why these orthodox Jews left. Leviticus 3:17 says, “It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.” And, by the way, you’d be a whole lot more healthy if you’d obey that. Don’t eat the blood, don’t eat the fat, for all your generations. That’s what God said to the Jews. That’s Leviticus chapter 3, verse 17. Then Leviticus chapter 17, verse 14: “For it—he’s talking about the blood—is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the life of all flesh is

the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.” And here Jesus is saying, “Eat my flesh and drink my blood.” They said, “That’s it. That’s it. So long. Good-bye. I’m outta here.” “This is horrible. It sounds like cannibalism. It’s absolutely unorthodox. It’s revolting. It’s savage. Good-bye.” They left. They were so offended at this statement of eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Well, they were not listening through spiritual ears. Jesus is not talking here about eating His literal flesh and drinking His literal blood. That would have been impossible—five or six quarts of blood in the human body. He’s talking the human race. I mean, there’s not enough blood, if we were to eat His literal flesh, His literal blood. Skip on down to verse 61, if you will: “When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” And then, notice, here’s the key to the whole thing in verse 63: “It is the spirit that quickeneth…” Do you know what the word quickeneth means? It means to make alive. The Bible speaks of the quick and the dead. Just like in Memphis traffic, if you’re not quick, you’re dead. “It is the spirit—it’s the spirit—that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing—now, underscore this phrase: The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Jesus said, “I’m not talking about eating my literal flesh. I’m not talking to you about drinking my literal blood. I am talking symbolically. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”

Jesus is using symbolic language. Jesus is using spiritual language. So we have to move from the physical to the spiritual to understand what our Lord is talking about, because God created both worlds. He created the physical world, and He created the spiritual world, and the physical world is just an image of the spiritual world, so we can understand things. What Jesus is saying when He’s saying, “You eat my flesh and drink my blood,” is that “you let my life be in you.” Look again in verse 53, and then you’re going to understand it. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” And then, look in verse 57: “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, even so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” What Jesus is talking about is this: that we must feed our spirits on Him, that Jesus—don’t miss this—Jesus is to your spirit what blood is to your body. That’s it.

Did you get it? Could you repeat it? If I gave you a test on it, this college, could you write that down? That’ll be on the final examination. Jesus is to your spirit what blood is to your body. Just as the life of the flesh is the blood, the life of my spirit is Jesus Christ. Do you understand that? “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” And Jesus is not talking only about the saving blood; He’s talking of now about the shared blood. Jesus was talking about His life being in me.

Do you know the reason that many Christians are failing? I mean, they're saved, they're born again, they're heaven-born, heaven-bound, but they're not living in victory, because they may understand the saving blood, but they've never understood the shared blood. They have never understood what it means to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. That is literally to feed on Him.

I've been reading a book by Dr. Paul Brand, a wonderful surgeon, and the title of the book is "In His Image." And he said some wonderful things about the blood, and I'm going to try and share some of them with you. Although the sermon outline is mine, some of the thoughts are his, because I'm certainly not a medical doctor. And I want to share some things he said concerning blood. And I want us to think about the natural world, and then I want us to make the application to the spiritual world.

I. We Must Appropriate the Constant Provision of the Blood

Number one: Listen to me—we must appropriate the constant provision of the blood. We must appropriate the constant provision of the blood. Every word there is important. We must appropriate the constant provision of the blood.

Now, your body, right now, sitting in that seat lives at the mercy of the blood. Your blood is constantly providing every cell in your body with nourishment. I want you to imagine—what are there, about 6 billion people upon the face of the earth? I want you to imagine a pipeline that runs all over the world, and it runs past every village, every town, every city, and it goes down every street, every alley, every pathway into the smallest, little hut, little home. A pipeline is just flowing all over the world, all around the world. There's not an island, there's not a continent, there's not a village, there's not a hamlet, there's not a neighborhood this pipeline doesn't go. And in this pipeline are little boats that are just going through this pipeline everywhere. These little boats are just going just like this all over. And on those boats is everything that a human being would need to survive. And so, if they need anything, any kind of sustenance, all they have to do is just kind of reach into that pipeline and take what they need off of those boats, and those boats are just constantly coming, and everybody is just getting what they need off those boats that are coming fast. Well, friend, that is what the blood does in your body. There is a pipeline in your body that is just supplying your body with everything that your body needs. Those little boats are the red cells in your blood stream.

Did you know—you're going to be surprised at this; I was surprised when I read it—in my body, in your body, there are 60,000 miles of blood vessels in one body—60,000 miles. Some of them very small, but if you were to line them all out, they would stretch for 60,000 miles. And through these vessels, through this pipeline to every cell, every part of your body, every organ of your body, the blood is flowing, and the blood, these

red cells, how many of those? Dr. Brand says 100 trillion of these little boats are just going through your body like that. While you're sitting here, just flowing to every part of your body, this pipeline is going. And in those boats is everything that every cell of your body needs in order to have life. There's oxygen, amino acids, nitrogen, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sugar, lipids, cholesterol, hormones—everything you need is on those little boats, and your cell is just picking them out, picking them out, picking them out, and they are just flowing past just like this. I mean, billions of them, just going like this. No wonder you're so tired. That's all going on inside of you right now, as you sit there.

Now, you live at the mercy of these cells. You could live a few, maybe two, days without water. You can live several weeks without food. Only a few minutes without oxygen. And those cells are bringing that oxygen; those red cells are bringing that oxygen to your body, as you sit here. And so, these vessels have everything that you need. Now, that's the reason why you have to keep replenishing the blood, because 30 billion of your red cells will die today. I said 30 billion of them. Four billion die a second, so you've been sitting here dying while you're listening to me right now. These blood cells are dying, but they're being reproduced all of the time.

One of the most commonly accepted medical facts is this: the life of the flesh is in the blood. Now, men did not know that for a long time. It wasn't until about in the 16th century that William Harvey even discovered that the blood circulates in the human body. But every cell in your body lives at the mercy of your blood. Your blood is a red river of life.

And so, Jesus is saying to His body, to the church, "You've got to have my blood in you." Not only is it saving blood; it needs to be shared blood. You know, the Bible says over there—I was reading this morning in the Book of Romans chapter 5, verse 9: "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son—that's the saving blood—much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." That's the shared blood. Listen—listen. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us that He might give Himself to us.

Now, you want me to tell you why we're failing? We can be going to heaven, and we can thank God for the shed blood, which is saving blood, but He gave Himself for us that He might give Himself to us, that we eat of His flesh, drink of His blood. And He's saying that my life might be in you, for He goes on to say—listen: "If we have been reconciled by His death, much more we'll be saved by His life"—saved by His life. There is the saving life of the Lord Jesus Christ. God didn't just forgive you and say, "All right now, gut it out. Live it as best you can." No. Just as in my human body everything that my human body needs to exist is delivered to me, by those red blood cells, those little

boats coursing through all these channels in my physiological makeup, so everything I need to live the Christian life is in Jesus. That was a good place for an amen. Bob said, “Mmmm.” Nobody else said anything. What, let’s try it again. Everything that I need to live the Christian life is in Jesus. That’s better. Listen.

Put down 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3—a great, great, great verse. Listen to it: “According as his divine power...”—don’t you love that? His divine power. Boy, we just blow past these words, don’t we? Listen to it—“According as his divine power hath given unto us...”—listen—“...hath given...”—we already have it. Not will give, not might give, not that we need to beg for it—“...hath given to us all things...”—not some things. A-L-L. How much does that mean? What does it all mean? It means all. Listen: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

How many people do you know living in glory and virtue? Not many, because they have not appropriated what God has given us. By His divine power He has given to us all things—all things—that pertain unto life and glory. How many of you have all the love that you need? Don’t lift your hand. How many of you have all the wisdom you need? Don’t lift your hand. How many of you have all the strength that you need? How many of you have all the courage you need? Don’t lift your hand. How many of you have all the patience that you need? Don’t lift your hand. Well, I submit to you, friend, that you do have all that you need. You say, “If I have it, how come I don’t have it?” You don’t have what you have because you haven’t possessed your possessions. God has given it to you, and what you need to do is to possess what God has already given to you.

Peter says—listen, “his divine power He has given us all things”—all things. Not He will give—might give. He has given to us. What did God tell Joshua when Joshua was about to go into the Promised Land? Let this rug represent the Promised Land. Let me represent Joshua. And God says to Joshua, “Now, Joshua, there’s the land. Go in and possess it.” And then, He says, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you.” Now, here’s Joshua. There’s the land over there. Was it Joshua’s? Yes. Did he have it? No. Why? He did not possess his possessions. “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you.” Not I will give it to you. Go in and take it. I’ve given it to you. Take it. It’s already yours. Take it.

You say, “I don’t understand that. What do you mean, possess your possessions?” How many of you have books in your library you haven’t read? Let me see your hands. Okay, are those your books? Yes. Have you possessed your possessions? No. You see, listen. We need to understand that we already have, through the blood of Jesus Christ, everything it takes to live the Christian life. I’m telling you, there is a river of life flowing in us. And now, Jesus is speaking metaphorically. He’s not talking literally; He’s

talking symbolically. He says, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” There is an abundant life through the resurrected Jesus. Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, is Jesus who has given Himself to us, that He might live through us. And that’s what the Christian life is all about.

There are so many people struggling, and trying, and failing, like that poor dog in the secret service. We need to possess our possessions. Now, that’s the first point, and I, and I want you to get it down in your heart. We must appropriate the constant provision of the blood. Just as in my physical body, the life of my physical body is the blood stream, in your spiritual life, that life is Jesus in you.

II. We Must Rely on the Cleansing Properties of the Blood

Number two—number two: We must rely on the cleansing properties of the blood, because not only does the blood supply, but the blood cleanses. Did you know that your body not only is bringing those little boats that we’re talking about that are constantly bringing everything that you need to nourish every soul—did you know those same little boats that are bringing all those wonderful things to every cell in your body are the same little boats that are hauling away the garbage? I mean, those red cells, they give all the stuff that you need. It’s all in there. Then, they pick up all of the uric acid, and they pick up the carbon dioxide, and they pick up all these metabolites that are in your body—these poisons, these toxics—and they’re carrying them away. They’re carrying them to the lungs to be expelled; they are carrying them to the kidneys to be extruded. They’re just taking off these things. It would be an amazing thing if you could get the milk truck to be the garbage truck at the same time, wouldn’t it? That’s what God has done. No wonder the Psalmist said, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

The blood not only supplies every need, but, dear friend, it cleanses constantly—it cleanses constantly. First John 1:7: “...the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son—does what?—cleanses us from all sin.” Not it cleansed, past tense; it is continually cleansing us. And without the blood flowing, you’re going to have a lot of toxin that builds up in you. Dr. Brand said you can take a cuff. You know, when they take your blood pressure, and they go puff, puff, puff, puff, puff, puff, and that thing goes like that. You’ve been there? You’ve done that? Put a cuff on your arm, he says, and pump it up real tight. And then, he says, begin to exercise your arm; begin to do something. Get a rubber ball, and begin to squeeze it. At first, he said, you’ll feel weak. Then, after a while, you’ll feel worse than weak. After a while, you will feel pain. And he says, after a while, the pain will become so excruciating that you will scream in pain, if you’ve just cut off the blood flow. Why? You know what’s happening? There are toxins that will be building up in that arm, in that hand, and the blood will not be flowing through there, and the blood will not

be carrying away those toxins, and the pain will be overwhelming. Then, you release that cuff, and the blood begins to flow back and forth again. You feel that relief.

Now, folks, I know a lot of folks who are living painfully, because they've let toxins build up in their lives—worry, and envy, and jealousy, and fear, and pride, and bitterness, and doubt; those things just build up. And, if you don't allow the shared blood to be constantly cleansing you, you're going to be living a life of pain. First John 1:7: "...the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin." And, if those things, those toxins are in you, it's because you've not been letting the blood of Jesus flow through you.

Now, you may be saved, and on your way to heaven, but you're miserable—you're miserable—because you don't have the saving life of Jesus Christ in you, and you're just miserable. You see, listen. Not only is there the constant provision; there, friend, is the cleansing property of the blood. It is the blood that cleanses—in the physical world and in the spiritual world.

Put down this verse. I was reading it recently from Hebrews chapter 9. It takes about the cleansing power of the blood. Hebrews 9, beginning in verse 11: "But Christ, being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of bulls, of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he hath entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh—listen to this—how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience..."—do you know what the word purge means? It means purify—"...from dead works to serve the living God?"

You don't have to go around with unconfessed, unforgiven sin. You don't have to drag yesterday into today. I've told you before, the way I start a day, on a normal day, is to lift my hands to God, and just say, "God, I thank You, Jesus, that You gave Yourself for me." That, friend, is the saving blood. Then, I lift my hands, and I say, "Thank You, Jesus, that You gave Yourself to me." That is the shared blood. Then, I lift my hands in surrender, and I say, "Now, Lord, live Your life through me. I am Yours today. Live Your life through me." He didn't just forgive me, and say, "Okay, Adrian, it's up to you."

He gave Himself for you, that He might give Himself to you, that He might live His life through you. And just as your body survives by that red river of life, the blood that is flowing in your body right now, the blood of Jesus Christ, the life of God wants to flow through His church, and there's that constant provision, and there are those cleansing properties of the blood of Jesus Christ. It is the blood that cleanses. It doesn't say cleansed. It says cleanses. It is continually cleansing, when we let that blood flow.

III. We Must Claim the Conquering Power of the Blood

Now, here's the third thing. Number three: We must claim the conquering power of the blood—the cleansing properties, but also the conquering power of the blood. Did you know that there is power, power, wonder-working power in the blood of Jesus? Do you know what the great enemy of mankind is? The great enemy of mankind is not war. The great enemy of mankind is not wild beasts. The great enemy of mankind is bacteria and viruses. In World War II, 8 ½ million people died. But shortly after the Armistice was signed, a flu epidemic killed 25 million people—a flu epidemic. In 1348, the Black Plague hit Europe. What had happened is this: that about a million visitors had come to Rome, to visit Rome. They were pilgrims. And, when they were there, they got infected with the plague, and historians tell us that it killed one third of the people in Europe—one third. I mean, it would be like just taking one third of this auditorium, and they all were killed with that one disease.

Now, these bacteria, these viruses, they invade the body. And when they invade the body, the blood—listen—the blood declares war on them. Now, the part of the blood that does that is the white blood cells. Dr. Brand says there are five distinct kinds of white blood cells, and let me quote him. He says, “Some white cells, armed with crude chemicals, serve as shock troops, and attempt to overwhelm the invaders through sheer numbers. Others with massively shielded cell walls roll in with heavier ammunition like battle tanks. Attack strategy differs also. Some white cells free float in the blood stream sniping at strays. Some stalk the vital organs, alert for any invader that may slip through the initial defenses. Others try to corral invaders into a fortress-like lymph gland for execution. And still others, the sanitary core, linger until the battlefield is strewn with bits and leaking protoplasm, and then move in to clean up after the mle.

What he's saying is that there are warriors inside of you, these white cells, normally 25 billion at one time in the body. But if you get an infection, those 25 billion can multiply 10 times that many right away. That's one way a doctor can tell whether or not you have an infection. The average white cell lives only about 10 hours, but a few live 60 or 70 years, and some of these white cells have little entities attached to them called antibodies. That's kind of a bad name because they're not against the body; they're really for the body—called antibodies. And these antibodies have a memory, and that's the reason why they will stay for about 60 or 70 years. And, if there ever comes an invader, any kind of a virus or bacteria, this antibody has a memory that says, “I know you. I know your name. I know your rank. I know your serial number. I know what you're up against.” And this antibody tells the right kind of white cell, says, “Go get him. Sic him. Get him.” And these antibodies have a memory, a wonderful memory. And so, they mobilize these white cells in your body to go and attack that enemy, and an antibody will

only attack one kind of an enemy. For example, the antibody against measles would not be an antibody against polio, or whatever. But you have all these little antibodies.

We're so fearful and wonderfully made. And God's got these little gizmos in there, and they're guiding these cells. You know, it's command central. But Dr. Brand said that sometimes a person will get a disease from having been transported from some foreign land or something, and comes over here, and the body doesn't know it; it doesn't recognize this invader—never seen him before. He doesn't know his name, doesn't know his rank, doesn't know his serial number. It can't. So, the antibody runs to the lymph glands, and says, "Look, we've got to build some munitions. We've got to get started. We've got an invader. We've got to get ready. Come on, guys, get together. Come one, let's go, let's go, let's go." But there's a time gap, and the body cannot mobilize, and the body cannot get ready, and this invader has come in, and there's a time gap, and people die because of the time gap, because there's no antibody, and they are at the mercy of this time gap. And then came along Louis Pasteur and Jenner, and others, and they learned something about how to immunize people against these diseases. And an immunization is, you take a weakened or a tired form of that disease that somebody else has had, and that weakened and tired form has a chemical memory, and you put that from somebody else's body into your body, and then your antibodies have the same memory that that person's antibody has, and then you're ready to go.

For example, smallpox—smallpox used to be a devastating disease. When Cortez, the explorer, came and visited the Aztec Indians, he left behind one of his soldiers that had smallpox, and in two years 4 million of the Aztecs died, because they didn't have any antibodies. They didn't recognize this. Then one day, Jenner was talking to a milkmaid, and she said, "I'm not afraid of smallpox." He said, "Why?" She said, "I've had cowpox." He got to thinking, and he learned how to immunize by taking a weakened form of a disease and putting it in a human body, so that that weakened form of that disease could then mobilize, and get the name, rank, and serial number of these invaders, and call their army to war. And we virtually eliminated smallpox because of this. And you know what they call that blood that has had this disease and overcome this disease? I love it. They call it wise blood—wise blood, wise blood. "We know you. We're going to get ya." Wise blood.

Now, listen. A woman who has been immunized has wise blood. Now, listen to me carefully, and I'm almost finished. The blood of Jesus is wise blood. Now, that's the whole thing. The blood of Jesus is wise blood. You see, anything Jesus has overcome we can overcome. That's another good place for an amen. Anything Jesus has overcome we can overcome. John 16, verse 33: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I

have overcome the world.” And that’s the reason they said, over there in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 11, speaking of the saints who doing warfare against Satan, “...and they overcame him by the blood of the lamb.” They overcame him by the blood of the lamb. Satan has no power against the blood of Jesus Christ that flows through His body, which is the church. This is the shared blood. We’re not here just to wallow in pain. Jesus said, “Because I live, you’ll live also. My life is in you. If you don’t eat my flesh and drink my blood, you won’t have any life in you.”

Thank God for the constant provision of the blood. Every need I have is in the blood of Jesus. Thank God, friend, for the cleansing power of the blood, because all of my sin can be forgiven in the Lord Jesus. Thank God for the conquering power of the blood, the wise blood—Jesus has overcome, and so can I.

Conclusion

Napoleon—they said that Napoleon, after he lost the Battle at Waterloo, was in a chart room with some of his generals. And they had the map of the world up there, and the British Isles were in red. And they said Napoleon took a pointer, and pointed to the British Isles that were in red, and said, “Had it not been for that red spot, I would have conquered the world.” Surely, surely, the devil has to say that about Calvary, doesn’t he? Had it not been for that red spot, I would have conquered the world. There is power, power, wonder-working power, in the precious blood of the lamb. Friend, let that blood that was shed on Calvary now flow through you. Well, you say, “Pastor, how do you do that?” Read that 6th chapter. I’ve run out of time, but here’s what it is. Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” The Word of God is to your spirit what blood is to your body. “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Jesus is saying, “The flesh profits nothing. I’m not talking about eating my literal flesh and drinking my literal blood. Let my word abide in you.” Get these truths down, friend, and live by them, and get out of the secret service, and be a real police dog. I mean, be a man of God, or a woman of God. There is power, power, wonder-working power, in the precious blood of the lamb.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. You know, it’s time that some people here in this building did business with God. Some in this building need to be saved—you’ve never been saved. I mean, you don’t know anything about the saving blood. You’ve never really had your sin forgiven. You’ve never been made fit for Heaven. Remember, there’s no way that you can be saved apart from the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, in Leviticus 17, “Without the shedding of blood, there’s no remission.” But, right now, because Jesus took your sins upon Himself, and with His blood upon the cross paid your sin debt, you can be saved. If you want to be

saved, I want you to pray this prayer. Pray it silently, but fervently: Dear God. I know that you love me; I know that you want to save me. I am a sinner; I am lost. My sin deserves judgment, but I need and want mercy. Jesus, you died to save me, and you promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Would you tell Him that? Right now, this moment, with all of my heart, like a child, once and for all, now and forever, I trust you. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. Thank you, Jesus, for doing it. Thank you for saving me. Thank you, Jesus. You're now my Lord and my Master, and I will live for you. I will not be ashamed of you. I will confess you openly and publicly—not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved. I will acknowledge you as my Lord and Savior. Give me the strength to do it. In your name I pray. Amen.”

There Is Power in the Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 24, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 6:53–63

Outline

Introduction

- I. His Blood Is Sacred Blood
 - II. His Blood Was Shed Blood
 - III. His Blood Was Saving Blood
 - IV. His Blood Was Shared Blood
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word tonight and turn to John chapter 6. We're going to have a Bible study together before we observe the Lord's Supper. We've already sung tonight, "There is Power in the Blood." And I don't know a better title for tonight's message than that song, "There is Power in the Blood." As we take the Lord's Supper, we will receive the cup. And Jesus said of that cup, "This cup is the New Testament, the new covenant in my blood..."

Years ago, preachers used to speak of a church that would be a solid church, and they would say, "We preach the book, the blood, and the blessed hope." The book—God's Word. The blood—the blood of the Lord Jesus shed for our atoning, for the atonement of our sins. And the blessed hope—the coming again of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, by the way, if you ever move from here, and I trust you will not have to, but if you ever do, look for a church that makes much of the book, the blood, and the blessed hope, and you'll know that they're pretty well anchored in the Word of God and the truths of God's Word.

Now, we're going to take the middle of that trinity of blessed truths—the blood—and we're going to think about the blood tonight and the power of the blood before we have the Lord's, Supper.

I begin reading in verse 53: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed—that means, it is food indeed—and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me,

and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Now, there are many Christians today who are failing in their Christian walk, because they have never discovered, or yet, they have never appropriated the power of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Now, let me tell you something about the blood of Jesus Christ.

I. His Blood Is Sacred Blood

First of all, His blood is sacred blood. The blood that flowed through the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ was not like the blood of any other individual. Jesus was sired by God above. He was born of the Spirit. He was born of the Holy Spirit of God. He was a virgin-born person. Therefore, the blood that flowed through His veins was the very blood of God. It is the Father who determines the blood type, not the mother. Don't ever get the idea that the child's blood and the mother's blood intermingle while the baby is there in its mother's womb. Not so! The mother may even have one blood type and the child another. Sometimes in paternity suits, the scientists can prove who may have or did not father a particular child, because it is the father that determines the blood type.

Now, when Jesus Christ walked this earth, the blood that flowed through His veins was the blood of God. Now, you may say, “That's impossible, Pastor, because God is a spirit and a spirit doesn't have blood.” Well, it is not impossible. Acts chapter 20 and verse 28: “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.” The church of God, which He—God—purchased with His own blood. God had blood when Jesus walked this earth. And Jesus was virgin-born. He was sired of God the Father. And that blood is—do you have it?—sacred blood.

II. His Blood Was Shed Blood

Now, here's something else I want you to see: that sacred blood was shed blood. Jesus said, “This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed, which is given

for you.” And, this blood was not merely taken from Him. He said, “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.” And the life of the flesh is in the blood. And the Bible tells us, in Leviticus chapter 17 and verse 11, “...it is the blood that maketh atonement for your sin.” And had there been no blood shed at Calvary, your sins could never be forgiven. It is the blood that makes atonement, because the life of the flesh is in the blood. The wages of sin is death. Jesus paid with His life’s blood the wages of our sin. And because He died as a substitute, we can be saved. So that sacred blood was shed blood.

III. His Blood Was Saving Blood

And, that shed blood, therefore, is saving blood. It is the blood that maketh atonement. I hear folks boast about being a Baptist. They say, “I’m a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist.” You’d better be a “washed-in-the-blood Baptist. Friend, it’s the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all sin. And we sing it often, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” So it is, this blood is sacred blood. The sacred blood was shed blood. The shed blood is saving blood. Now, we know that. We often hear that.

IV. His Blood Was Shared Blood

But I want to go a step further, and talk to you about the shared blood—the shared blood—because in this passage of Scripture Jesus speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Now, to the Jews, and to any person listening at first who did not understand, this was, to say it mildly, it was grotesque. They said, “What’s He talking about? We’re to eat His flesh? We’re to drink His blood? How can we do that?” Jesus knew that they were murmuring. Jesus knew that they were offended. But He also knew that spiritually they were numbskulls. They did not understand what He was saying, and He had to explain it to them in verse 63: “I’m not talking about eating my flesh literally. I’m not talking about drinking my blood literally. I am talking in spiritual terms. It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. Understand the spiritual principle here when I’m talking about eating my flesh and drinking my blood.”

Now, as we prepare for the Lord’s Supper, and as we take that ruby red cup and we ingest it, we are fulfilling what Jesus Christ was talking about. At least, we’re symbolically fulfilling what Jesus Christ is talking about here of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. There are three things I want you to get into your heart tonight before we have the Lord’s Supper as we think about the shared blood. Thank God for the sacred blood. Thank God for the shed blood. Thank God for the saving blood. But

think with me now about the shared blood, eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Now, what Jesus is saying when He says, “to eat my flesh and drink my blood,” what He is saying is, “I want you to partake of me. I want my life to be in you.” You see, Jesus gave Himself for you, that He might give Himself to you. And so, Jesus wants you to appropriate Him. And Jesus not only died for you, but He lives for you. And the Bible says, in Romans chapter 5, verse 10: “...we are saved by his life.” We’re reconciled by His death; we are saved by His life.

Now, if you want to understand something about the shared blood, let’s think about the blood that flows in your body, or in my body. The blood is called, and rightly so, a red river of life. And the Bible says one of the most medically correct statements you’ll ever read anywhere about hematology, that the life of the flesh is in the blood.

You have in your body about 100 trillion cells, and your blood nourishes those cells. It’s like a river that just flows to each one of those cells and deposits oxygen, amino acids, nitrogen, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sugars, cholesterol, hormones. The blood is feeding those cells. You have about 60 thousand miles of blood cells in your body. And, for one thing, these red cells carry oxygen. The red blood cells carry oxygen to those other cells. You can live several days without water, several weeks without food, but only a few minutes without oxygen. And it is the blood that brings the oxygen and the food to these cells.

Now, I want you to imagine Venice where we have all the canals. And imagine that you live in Venice, and you don’t have an automobile to get around, because you live on a canal. And I want you to imagine a boat, boats that are continually coming to your front door, and everything that you need is on that boat. And, if you need groceries, it’s on that boat. If you need fuel, it’s on that boat. If you need medicine, it’s on that boat. If you need water to drink, it’s on that boat. And when that boat leaves, another one is coming, and another one is coming, and another one is coming. And, on those little boats is everything that you need to live. Well, the cells in your body are like that. And, these red blood cells are like those little boats that just come past every cell in your body, and whatever that cell needs it just reaches in and gets.

Now, when Jesus said, “You must eat my flesh and drink my blood,” what He is saying is that, “In me, you’re complete. I mean, everything that you need to live the Christian life is in my life.” Now, I hope you’ll understand that. Every cell in the body of Christ—aren’t we the body of Christ?—every cell in the body of Christ lives at the mercy of the blood. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, His life in us, that supplies every need that we have. And so I want you to say this—I want you to say this tonight: “His life in me—His life in me. His blood in me is sufficient for my completeness.” The Bible says, “In Him, we are complete.” Everything that you possibly need spiritually is supplied by the

precious blood of Jesus Christ—the shared blood.

But not only do I want you to see that His life in you is sufficient for completeness, but I want you to see that His life in you is sufficient for cleansing, because the blood that also feeds every cell in the body is the blood that also cleanses the cells in the body.

Now, I said that these boats deliver all of these good things to the cells in the body, these red blood cells, this red river of life, these little boats that pass by every cell. But not only do they do that, but they also carry away the refuse. They carry away the garbage. Can you imagine the same truck that would deliver groceries would be a garbage truck, and at the same time carry away the garbage? These cells pick up the metabolites or the garbage in our bodies when the red blood cells bring the oxygen to my cells, but the red cells also carry away the carbon dioxide, the poison gas. It carries that away. So, it's bringing the oxygen. It's taking away the carbon dioxide to my lungs, and my lungs expel that out into the air. And the red cells pick up uric acid and carry them down to my kidneys. And, then, they expel this through the kidneys. And, it's an amazing thing. The red cells are just feeding my body, and carrying away the poisons.

I was reading—and Dr. Paul Brandt has written a wonderful book about the body, and I'm indebted to him for some of the things I'm sharing with you tonight. But, he mentioned an illustration. He said if you were to put a cuff on your arm, you know, like they do when they take your blood pressure, and they pump that thing up, and then they begin to listen. He said, "Pump up that cuff to till it measures about 200. It's good and tight." And then, he says, "Take a rubber ball or something like that, and begin to squeeze it, to exercise." He says, "Of course now, the blood is cut off from the lower part of the arm because the blood vessels are constricted and restricted, and you begin to pump that. He says, "At first, you'll feel weak, because the blood is no longer giving you the strength." But then, he said, "You will begin to feel pain." And then, he said, "In a short time, you will feel excruciating pain, so much that you will cry out in pain." Why is that? Well, the blood is cut off, you have no strength in that arm, and also the poisons can't be carried off. And what you will feel is toxins that are building up in you, and those toxins will cause incredible pain. Then take the cuff off. Let the blood flow. And you'll feel that strength, and the pain will leave. Because, you see, the blood is not only necessary for completeness; it's necessary for cleansing. The Bible says, in 1 John 1, verse 7: "...the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin." So thank God for the shed blood, but thank God for the shared blood, the blood of Jesus that tonight can make you clean and keep you clean. Well, you say, "What kind of poisons are in me?" Worry. Envy. Jealousy. Fear. Pride. Bitterness. Doubt. These things will be pain to your spirit, just as toxins in the physical realm will bring pain to your body. Now,

the beautiful thing is that God wants to meet every need that you have through the precious blood of Jesus Christ—His life in you, His life in you—and God wants to cleanse you by His life in you.

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice about the blood tonight, and then we're going to have the Lord's Supper. I'm talking about the power of the blood. Not the power of the shed blood, although we thank God for that, but the power of the shared blood. The shared blood meets every need that you have spiritually. The shared blood cleanses from every sin as you call upon the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from sin. But the third thing I want you to think about is not only the cleansing power of the blood, but His life in me is sufficient also for conquest—for completeness, for cleansing, and for conquest. Because, you see, your blood fights disease. It is your blood; it's the blood in your body that wars against bacteria, that wars against all kinds of virus. Now, we think of war in the physical realm as the great enemy of mankind. But the great enemy of mankind is not primarily war; it's bacteria and virus. In World War II, 8 ½ million people died. But one year after the armistice was signed, a flu epidemic killed 25 million people.

Now, in my body physically the blood mobilizes to fight disease. We've been talking about the red blood cells that carry the nutrients and carry away the garbage. But the white blood cells, these are the soldiers that go to work against the bacteria and against the enemies. Normally, you have in your body about 25 billion white blood cells, but one of the ways the doctor can find out whether you have an infection is to do a blood count and find out if you've got more white blood cells than normal. If an infection comes into your body, the number of white blood cells may jump up to ten times what you would normally have. Now, the white cells live for a very short time, just about 10 hours, but some of them live for 60 or 70 years. And the ones that live for 60 or 70 years are very special white blood cells, because these are the smart ones. They have, in conjunction with them, antibodies, and these antibodies will guide the white blood cells to where the enemy comes in. They know the name, rank, and serial number of an enemy. And when that enemy invades your body, the white blood cells say, "We know the name of that fellow. We know what he's trying to do. Come on, guys, let's go get him!" And your body begins to produce these soldiers, these white blood cells, and they, they move to the source of the infection and begin to fight against that infection. That's a wonderful thing. And, I don't want to get gross, but if you have a boil, and that puss that comes out, these are just little soldiers who gave their life for you, these white blood cells who have mobilized there to kill the enemy—to kill the enemy. They died that you might live.

But now, you know, sometimes a strange enemy will come, one that your body doesn't recognize, one that the white blood cells in your body don't have the name, rank, and serial number of. And so, they say, "We've got a strange enemy here. Here's

a disease we're not familiar with." Here's an attacker. The alarm has sounded. They go to the lymph glands, and say, "We've got to have some soldiers to go fight this enemy. We've got to have someone who knows exactly how to fight this particular type of enemy." And so, your body goes to work to produce these little soldiers, but the time gap is too great, and they don't get to the source of the infection in time, and your body dies because of the deadly time gap.

But I spoke this morning in the message about Dr. Pasteur who, along with others, developed the process, Jenner and others, to immunize people against a disease. What happened is this: that, one day, Jenner was talking to a milkmaid, and they were talking about the incredibly devastating disease of smallpox. And, this milkmaid said, "I'm not afraid of smallpox, because I've had cowpox." He got to thinking about that, and he came to where he was able to develop, along with others, a process to immunize a person. Now, here you're about to get a blessing. Not because I'm saying it. I learned it from someone else, but here's a great blessing. They found out that you could take a weakened form of a disease from another person's blood, inject it into your own body, and that other person who's already had that disease has the name, rank, and serial number of the disease that may affect you, and so already you have that information on the inside. You have the name, the rank, the serial number of those invaders. And so, if that invader comes to you, you already know what to do with him. Your white blood cells say, "Hey! We know that guy! We'll fix his wagon! Come on, guys, let's go!" And there's no time lapse. They've already got that information in there, and so they go and attack the enemy, and the smallpox can't get you, because you've already been vaccinated. Another person's blood has fortified you.

When a person is inoculated like that, do you know what kind of blood they say he has? Wise blood! Wise blood! Now, you think of the completeness of the blood, everything you need. Your body lives at the mercy of the blood. You think of the cleansing of the blood. But think of the conquest of the blood. Whose blood is wise blood? Jesus' blood is wise blood, because, you see, Jesus took the disease of sin in Himself. He suffered. He bled. He died. And this is what Jesus says, in John chapter 16, verse 33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Now, Jesus said, "I have overcome the world. I am an overcomer. I have met the enemy. I have overcome him." And then we read over there in the book of the Revelation chapter 12, verse 11, speaking of the saints: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb..." They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb. You see, Jesus said, "I have overcome! Now, share my life. Let my blood be in you, and you'll overcome." I want to tell you something. Jesus has met the enemy, and He has vanquished the enemy. Now,

Jesus said, “Let my life be in you. You in me can have wise blood.”

The shared blood—that’s what we’re talking about tonight when we take this Lord’s Supper. That’s what Jesus meant, when He said, “Eat my flesh, and drink my blood.”

Now, that brings one last question, and then we’re going to have the Lord’s Supper: “Pastor, how do I appropriate this? Is He talking primarily here about coming to the Lord’s Table?” No! He’s talking about what the Lord’s Table symbolizes. It goes beyond that. He’s not talking about having a blood transfusion. He’s not talking about inoculation. He’s certainly not talking about eating His literal flesh and drinking His literal blood. Only 5 or 6 quarts of literal blood were in His body. How do you appropriate what we’re talking about? How do you have this completeness? How do you have this cleansing? How do you have this conquest? How?—I say. All right, listen. Look again in verse 61: “When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, and he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” He says, “I’m getting out of here. You’re not going to eat my literal flesh, drink my literal blood. It is the spirit that quickeneth—the word quickeneth means “makes alive”—the flesh profiteth nothing...”—now, here it is. You want to know how to share His life? Here it is. Don’t miss it. Don’t miss it—“...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Do you have it? Did you see it? Did you underscore it? Do you believe it? “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Conclusion

Now, when you let His Word flow through you, it will be to your spirit what blood is to your literal body. His Word will be to your spirit what blood is to your literal body. You need to read His Word. You need to heed His Word. You need to hear His Word. You need to keep His commandments. Listen to John 15, verse 7: “If ye abide in me—now listen—and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Listen to John 14, verse 23: “Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Listen to Mark 13, verse 31: “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” Listen to Mark chapter 8 and verse 38: “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of the Father with his holy angels.”

After Jesus began to tell them this, the disciples, many of His followers, left. Jesus turned to His disciples, and said, “Will you also go away?” And I love what Peter said. He said in verses 68 and 69: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of

eternal life.” He got it! He got it! “You have the words of life.”

Folks, I want to say again, it is God’s life in you that will be to your spirit what blood is to your literal body. You will have completeness. You will have cleansing. You will have conquest as you soak your soul in His Word. “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

Friend, thank God for the shared blood, as this book applies to us the body and the blood of our risen Lord. And that’s what we’re going to celebrate. Brother Jim, lead us in a chorus.

There's Power in the Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 25, 1986

Main Scripture Text: John 6:53–63

Outline

Introduction

I. Sacred Blood

II. Saving Blood

III. Shared Blood

A. Commodities in the Blood

B. Cleansing in the Blood

C. Conquest in the Blood

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God's Word please, and turn, if you have your Bibles with you, to John, chapter 6. And if you did not bring a Bible, then there probably is one there in the pew rack in front you. John, chapter 6—the title of our message is "There Is Power in the Blood."

I begin reading a very strange passage of Scripture, now—John, chapter 6, and verse 53: *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat"—that means food—"indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"* And then, here's the key: *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:53–63).

Now the first song that we sang in our series of hymns this morning was "There's Power in the Blood." "Would you be free from your passion and pride, there's power in

the blood.” That is, we’re to have victory in the blood of Jesus. But in all honesty, how many Christians in this church, or any other church, do you know of that are really living, walking in victory, and that are experiencing victory? I do not know of very many. And why is this? Is it because the blood really doesn’t have any power, or because they have not availed themselves of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ? I’ll tell you why I think it is: I think it is because there are many Christians today who understand the power of the shed blood, but they do not understand the power of the shared blood of Jesus. And I believe that, if you’ll learn this truth today, then your heart will be warmed and blessed, as mine was when I prepared this message. Now let me tell you about the blood of Jesus Christ.

I. Sacred Blood

First of all, it is sacred blood, because Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. And the virgin birth was so necessary for Jesus to be who He was. It was so necessary for Jesus to have the kind of blood that He had in him. Now what kind of blood flowed through the veins of the Lord Jesus? Well, it was sacred blood, and I’ll tell you why: Jesus was virgin-born. We need to understand this: that the blood is determined by the father, and not by the mother. Did you know that? Did you know that a baby, in its mother’s womb, may have one type of blood, and a mother may have an entirely different type of blood. There’s no interchange of blood between that baby in its mother’s womb and the mother, as is commonly thought. The blood is entirely separate, and the blood is determined by the father.

Now even a child may have a different blood-type than the father, or may have the same blood-type as the father, but the type is determined by the sperm that is donated—not by the egg. And sometimes, in paternity suits, they can tell whether or not a man could have had a certain child by doing a blood test of the child and the father. What I’m trying to say is this: It is the father that determines the blood. And the blood that flows through the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ was blood that was contributed by God Almighty. And you see, that blood that was in Jesus was divine blood—it was sacred blood; it was the blood of God—the blood of God. You say, “Wait a minute, Pastor. God is a Spirit, and God doesn’t have blood.” He did, when Jesus was here on this earth. And if you will, read in Acts—the 20th chapter. Paul is talking to those Ephesian elders—I think in about verse 28—and he says you take care that you “*feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28)—with his blood. The church was purchased with the blood of God.

II. Saving Blood

It's sacred blood; and, because it is sacred blood, it is saving blood. You see, had that blood not been sacred blood, it could have saved no one, because Jesus Christ had to be innocent in order to die for our sin. You see, the Bible says that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), that "the soul that sinneth, and that it shall surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). And there is a capital punishment that our sins deserve, but Jesus took our sins upon Himself and became an innocent substitute, and suffered the death we should have suffered. He died for us; but had He not been sinless, He could not have died for me. He would have had to die for Himself alone, but not for me. He could have only paid the sin penalty for Himself; He could never have paid mine, had He not been innocent.

But the Bible says: "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). And Jesus took our sins, and there, as an innocent sacrifice, He paid for our sins. And without the virgin birth, you couldn't be saved. You see, he came as He did—virgin-born, to be what He was—sinless. He was what he was—sinless, to do what he did—to be our substitute. He was what he was, did what he did, and became what he did, that we might have our sins forgiven and be saved.

Now God never overlooked sin. Sin is always paid for. If God were to overlook sin, then God would no longer be holy. God has sworn by His holiness that sin must be punished. Now they say in a courtroom, that, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. That is, if a judge knowingly, willingly, and deliberately allows a criminal to go free, then the judge himself becomes a criminal. Now if God were to allow sin to go unpunished, then God Himself would topple from His throne of holiness, and God would become a sinner. Now God cannot do that, so God doesn't overlook sin; He pays for sin with a sinless sacrifice—the blood of His own Son. And therefore, the Bible tells of the pardon that is in the blood of Jesus.

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name. (Edward Mote)

III. Shared Blood

Now Baptists know that. Methodists and Presbyterians—we know that. We know that it is sacred blood, and we know that it is saving blood, but here's where we fail, and here's why so many of us are not living in victory: We have not understood the secret of shared blood. Now Jesus said something that day that scandalized them—I mean, that was repugnant to them. Jesus said that you must eat His flesh and drink His blood. When Jesus said this, they left Him. So many of them left Him that He had to turn to His

disciples and ask them this question: “Are you going to go away, too? Will you also go away?” (John 6:67)

What was it that so scandalized them? Well, let me show you here; let’s just do a little Bible study. Turn to the Book of Genesis, for example, and look with me in Genesis, chapter 9—if you have your Bible—and verse 4. And get your Bibles out and use them, if you will now, because it’ll be worth it for you to see these Scriptures—Genesis, chapter 9, and verse 4. Here’s what God had said, back before Moses, back before the Mosaic Law: *“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat”* (Genesis 9:4). God said that you shall never eat any kind of meat that has blood in it.

Then, turn, if you will please, to Leviticus, chapter 3. Now you’re still in the Old Testament—just turn a few books to the right, and to the Book of Leviticus, chapter 3. And I want you to look with me in verse 17—Leviticus 3, verse 17—listen to what God says: *“It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood”* (Leviticus 3:17). Ladies and gentleman, we would be so much healthier today, if we would listen to what God says right here, in Leviticus, chapter 3, and verse 17.

Turn over, if you will, to Leviticus, chapter 7, and look in verse 26: *“Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings”* (Leviticus 7:26). And then again, in verse 27: *“Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people”* (Leviticus 7:27). You can understand now why a conservative Jew—an Orthodox, rather—is so careful about kosher foods. This had the blood drained out of it. Look, if you will, in Leviticus, chapter 17, and verse 11—here is the reason for all of this: *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”* (Leviticus 17:11)—no remission of sin. Look in verse 14—Leviticus 7, verse 14: *“For It is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off”* (Leviticus 17:14).

“Well,” you say, “good enough, Pastor. Before the law, God said, ‘Don’t drink blood.’ During the law, God said, ‘Don’t ingest blood.’” But what about after the law? Well, turn to Acts, chapter 15, with me, for a moment. Now we’re over in the New Testament. Now in the New Testament, there was a discussion and a dispute in the church as to what kind of Old Testament ceremonies and moral precepts should carry over into the New Testament. And so they had a conference, and they called it the Jerusalem Conference. And they were saying, “What shall we tell these Gentiles to do? They’re not under the

Mosaic Law. What shall be the basic requirements for them?” They discussed it for several days, and then, we read this in Acts, chapter 15, and verse 28. Here’s what they said: *“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things”* (Acts 15:28). Now what are the necessary things? *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well”* (Acts 15:29). So you want to fare well? All right, God said it: “Now you abstain from these things...”

He mentions four of them, and two of them have to do with eating blood. He said, “Abstain from blood”—that is, don’t eat any blood. And then, he said, “from things strangled.” Now when you strangle something, you don’t bleed it, and you don’t cut the throat—you just choke it to death, and the blood is still in it. And so God said, “Don’t eat meat that has been killed that way. Only eat meat that has been properly bled.”

Now all through their lives, these Jews have been hearing this: “Eat no blood, eat no blood, eat no blood. The life of the flesh is in the blood. If you eat blood, then you’ll be cut off, and so forth.” And then, Jesus, on this day, stands up, and Jesus says, “You are to eat My flesh and drink My blood.” Now you can imagine why they were scandalized. As the kids would say, it *grossed them out*. I mean, it grossed them out. They said, “This is savage; this is terrible.” And they left Him, and they forsook Him; but Jesus clears it up.

Go back, if you will, to John, chapter 6, here now, for just a moment, where we started, and look with me, if you will, in verse 63, and see what Jesus had in mind when He was giving this marvelous and dynamic teaching. In verse 63, Jesus said: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing”* (John 6:63). That is, “I am talking to you in spiritual terms: You’re not going to eat my fingers and my toes. You’re not going to actually drink my blood. There are only five or six quarts of it, and that certainly wouldn’t be enough for everybody in the world.” He’s not talking about that. *“The words I speak unto you,”* Jesus said, *“they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). I’m talking to you about something that deals with your very life.

Now listen. The shed blood deals with the penalty of sin. He paid that penalty, but the shared blood deals with the power of sin. When we share His blood—when His blood is a part of us—then we have power. And I want you to learn something of this marvelous power of the blood. There is no more potent message, than to spiritually understand what Jesus meant here in John, chapter 6. So there are three great thoughts I want to have for you.

A. **Commodities in the Blood**

The very first thing I want you to notice is what I'm going to call the commodities in the blood—the commodities in the blood. Now remember, there is life in the blood. What Jesus is saying is this: "My life must be in you."

Let me get you to imagine something today. I want you to imagine a gigantic pipeline—I mean, a big pipeline. But yet, I want you to see this pipeline as it literally flows all over the world. I mean, it passes by every house; it goes up every street, into every neighborhood, by every tent, by every palace, by every shack, and by every hut. This pipeline starts in Key West, and it goes on up to Maine; it starts in Charleston, and it goes on over to San Diego; it goes up into Alaska; it goes all over Canada; it spills down into the Atlantic Ocean; it comes up there in the British Isles, crosses the channel, and it goes into Portugal; it goes into Spain; it goes into Switzerland; it goes into Germany; it goes up into Russia, and it comes down through the Balkans; it goes up to Scandinavia, and it goes on down through Asia; it goes into China, and it comes through the Middle East; it goes on down into Africa, and it goes on down to the Indonesian Islands; it goes over to Australia and New Guinea—all over the world this pipeline flows, and of all the people on the face of this earth—4 billion plus—every one of them has this pipeline to come right past where they live.

Then, I want you to imagine, in this pipeline, boats, and these boats are just loaded with all of the things that people need—everything that you could possibly need to survive is in this boat. You need food—all kind of food is in this boat; you just reach in and take it out—fruit, vegetables, and meat of all kinds. You need clothes, and clothes are in that boat. You need medicine, and medicine is in that boat. You need something to read, and reading materials are in that boat. You need a television set, and it's in the boat. You need a radio, and it's in the boat. You need a razor blade, and it's in the boat. Everything you need is in that boat, and it's just flowing past your house. If you miss that one, then another is coming. If you miss that one, then another one is coming, and they just keep coming. And in those boats is everything that you need, and all you have to do is just reach out and appropriate whatever you need. It's there for you—just for the taking.

Now if you can imagine that, then you can imagine something about what the blood vessels are in your body, and what they do for the cells of your body, because there is a pipeline that flows to every cell in your body—not to 4 billion cells—as there are 4 billion plus people upon the face of this earth—but the 100 trillion cells in your body. And in that pipeline, is everything that those cells need for life and survival. All of the commodities that those cells need are on those boats called red blood cells, and they just come floating by with everything the cell needs: oxygen—it's in there; amino

acids—they're there; nitrogen—it is there; sodium—it is there; potassium—it is there; calcium—it is there; magnesium—it is there; sugars—they're there; lipids—they are there; cholesterols—they are there; and hormones—they are there. Everything that cell needs, it can just reach out, and appropriate, and take.

In my body and in your body, there are 60,000 miles of blood vessels—some of them so minute and so small that you would need a microscope to delineate them. Now you can live about two days without water, and you can live several weeks without food, but you can only live a few minutes without oxygen—that oxygen that is carried to you by the blood stream.

You see, dear friend, those little red cells bring to you life. It is no wonder that the Bible says, clearly and plainly, the greatest and most commonly accepted medical fact is this: The life of the flesh is in the blood, just as God says. Right? I mean, back before the day of microbiology, and back before the day of modern medicine... I saw a sign on a bumper sticker—you've seen it—it's the blood donor program that has it: "I gave lifeblood"—"I gave lifeblood." The life of the flesh is in the blood.

Now are you listening to me? I am telling you, dear friend, that it is a physical fact, and there is a spiritual corresponding fact: Just as every cell in my body is at the mercy of my blood, every cell in the Body of Jesus is at the mercy of His blood. We live at the mercy of his blood, and all that we need is supplied by the atoning death and the saving life of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are reconciled by His death—that is, by shed blood. But oh, my friend, we're saved by His life—that is, by shared blood. And all that we need is in Jesus, and we can appropriate through the shared blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Cleansing in the Blood

So the first thing I've told you is this: There are commodities in the blood that you need. But there's something else—not only are there commodities in the blood, there is also cleansing in the blood. Now the Bible tells us, in 1 John, chapter 1, and verse 7, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, does what? It cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Now so many people think that perhaps you take blood and use it as a detergent to scrub things with. Friend, that'll just stain your clothes—no, that's not what he's talking about. He's talking here about the chemical properties in the blood to cleanse. Because, you see, in your body, there are certain wastes—there's a certain amount of garbage that builds up in your body as your cells burn that food and unite that food with oxygen that the cells carry there. The fuel and the food—there's waste, there's residue, and there's garbage that has to be carried away.

Now here's an interesting thing: Those same boats that have all of the goodies on

them also have garbage cans on them, and a lid. Your cell not only takes what it needs, but it dumps in all the garbage. And then, these cells—they go back up to the lungs again to get new oxygen, and to get rid of that carbon dioxide, and exhale; and that poison gas goes out, and that oxygen comes back in—they load up on oxygen. And those same cells will run down through the kidneys. And with every beat of your heart, about four gallons of blood are just pumped through those kidneys—and one red cell will circulate in 20 seconds through the entire body. And it is just getting rid of all that uric acid, and all of that poison, and all of that waste. And you're constantly being cleansed by the blood. The same blood that has the commodity has the cleansing—and you're being cleansed, totally and completely, by the blood.

Now let me tell you what you can do as an experiment. You go home and get yourself one of your home blood pressure kits, and you put that around your arm—you know, that cuff that they put there—and you pump it up to about 200. And what you've done is effectively cut off the blood from your hand, and you won't feel any discomfort immediately. But then, you get a rubber ball and start to squeeze that ball, or get some scissors and start to cut, or do some exercise with your hand—at first you're going to feel weakness, and then, suddenly, you are going to be stricken with excruciating pain. I mean, excruciating pain—pain that will be so severe that, before long, you will cry out; you won't be able to keep quiet. And as a matter of fact, the pain will be so severe that you cannot voluntarily continue to do what you're doing. Well, what has happened is this: that the blood is not able to cleanse, because the flow of the blood has been cut off. And the blood no longer will cleanse that arm, and that garbage—that residue that is left there; and that causes you pain.

Now folks, do this: Release now the cuff, and the blood will begin to flow again. And that tingling sensation will come, and then, that strength will come, and the pain will go, and you will feel relief and release. And what you have just experienced is the cleansing of the blood, as those poisons and those wastes are carried away that have caused so much pain. And you have a wonderful illustration about what the blood of Jesus Christ does to you, because, you see, in our lives, there's garbage that builds up. Fear, anger, worry, doubt, bitterness, hostility—this is garbage in your spiritual body; and if you leave it there, it is going to cause those pains that sin always causes, because sin and suffering are inseparably linked together, ultimately. But friend, I want to tell you, that if you have those kinds of pains in your body, then it is because you've not allowed the blood of Jesus Christ—God's Son—to flow through you. And it is that flowing blood—not just the shed blood, but the shared blood—the shared blood—that cleanses us and continues to cleanse us from all sin as the blood of God's Son begins to flow freely through us.

C. Conquest in the Blood

Now there's a third thing that I want to say about the blood: Not only do we see the commodity in the blood—everything that we need—and not only the cleansing. And by the way, before I get to the third thing, let me say this: that the blood that brings the good thing is the blood that carries away the bad things. And you know, there are some people—they don't want to be Christians, because they think they're going to have to give up something. Do you know what the blood carries away? Garbage, trash, and pain. *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). What God wants to do is to cleanse you, and empower you, and supply you with those things that will make you spiritually healthy and spiritually strong. And God's not asking you to give up anything that is good. And when you give up the bad, God gives you the good, because the same boat that has the goodies is the boat that carries away the garbage. So we see the commodity in the blood. And so we see the cleansing in the blood. But the third thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call the conquest in the blood.

You see, your blood is constantly fighting a battle, and your body is being invaded constantly. Now we think that the enemy to human life is maybe calamities like earthquakes and cyclones, or that great hailstorm that was recently in Texas, and so forth. Well, those are enemies all right, but they're not the big enemy. “Well,” you say, “the enemies of mankind are violence and war.” Well, those are enemies—but not the big enemy. The big enemies are invaders called microbes, invaders called bacteria, and invaders called viruses that come in and invade your body.

Let me give you an illustration of what I'm talking about. In World War I, 8 ½ million people died—were killed in war; but, one year after the armistice was signed, and there was peace called in the war, 25 million people died by a flu epidemic—25 million. Why, in 1348, there was the great plague that came to Europe. Now what had happened is this: that a great number of pilgrims—about a million people—had come to Rome to celebrate Easter, and the plague there started in Rome. And these people were infected, but they didn't stay in Rome—they went back over all of Europe, and they spread the plague. And do you know how many people died? One third of all of the people in Europe died—one third: one, two, three; one, two, dead; one, two, dead; one, two, dead; one, two, dead; one, two, dead—one third of the people died because of the plague. Now friend, listen. The great enemies are these bacteria, these microbes, that invade the rest of our bodies.

Now in the body, there is a defense mechanism. When these invaders come, the blood declares war on those invaders. Now the soldiers that go to war are not the red blood corpuscles, but the white ones. These white blood cells—they come, and there

are a great number of them in your body—normally about 25 billion of these white blood cells are in your body, and there are five different types of them. And when an invader comes in, they just go right to that invader and begin to destroy that invader.

Now a white blood cell lives for really only about 10 hours, and then, it dies, but there are some of them that are very important ones—they'll live for 60 or 60 or 80 years. And these ones that live for that long are ones that have memory in them. Now what happens is this: When an invader comes in, it's very important to know what that invader is, and how you must fight him, and what his weakness is. And so these white corpuscles—they get the name, rank, and serial number of this invader, so that they can whip him again. And so they stay with that chemical memory, so that when he comes in again, they'll just get a lot more just like those right kinds of guys that can go in and just beat the stuffing out of that invader. And when an invader comes in, these white cells can mobilize so quickly—and if there are not enough of them, then they'll just get some more. As a matter of fact, just in a short time, the number of white cells can be raised 10 times the normal amount. And when the doctor examines you, and examines your blood, if he sees a great number of white blood cells, then he says, "Uh oh, you must have an infection." There's so many of them there; they have mobilized to do this fighting; and there are some of them that have a chemical memory to deal with these invaders.

Also, you have in your body things called antibodies. Now the antibodies help the white cells against the invaders, called the antigens. The antibody gets in cahoots with the white cell, and it kind of guides the white cell to the enemy. It attaches itself to the enemy and helps soften up the enemy and break down the defenses of the enemy. And it has the enemy's name, rank, and serial number. And this antibody has this memory in it. And so together, they're able to keep your body from getting sick.

Now here's what happens sometimes, though. Sometimes a new disease will come, and this disease is so new that the body doesn't have any chemical memory, and there's no antibody that knows anything about it, and the white cells have never heard of this disease before. And so when it comes, they get a good look at it, and they run back to the lymph glands and to the other places where your body's computer is. And they say, "Look, we've got something new. It looks like this; it acts like this; it does this, but it doesn't do this." And your body starts to think, and to work, and to try to get together some ammunition, and get together the weapon that will defeat that invader, because it doesn't have this stored in its memory bank. But what happens is this: that some disease can get such a head-start—there is such a dangerous time-gap there—that by the time the body gets its defense mechanism going, that body has been overcome, and it dies.

Well, there were some men—Pasteur for one, Jenner for another—who discovered something. They discovered that you could immunize a body. They discovered that you could inoculate a body. They discovered that you can take a person, who is overcome with a disease that he has in his body, and take the antibodies that are needed. He has that memory in his memory bank already there, and so, what we can do is to get from this person a deteriorated form of that disease—a weakened, decaying form of that disease, just enough to get the memory—and put it into us. And then, our body says, “I know that disease now. If that disease ever comes, then I have got the background; I’ve got the memory bank; I know his name, rank, and serial number, and, if he comes in here, then I’m going to whip him.” And so when a person has overcome a disease, we call his blood *wise blood*. And so we can take the wisdom of that blood and put that blood into somebody else’s body, put that code into somebody else’s body, and then, he can overcome.

Now let me tell you, for example, about smallpox, and how smallpox is. Many of you—when you were little—had a smallpox vaccination. Smallpox is virtually gone, and now, they don’t give children smallpox vaccinations. But smallpox was such a devastating thing. When Cortez went down to the Aztec Indians—he was having a skirmish with them—he left one of his warriors behind, and that warrior had smallpox. And in two years, 4 million Aztecs died from smallpox. They’d never fought with this disease. They didn’t know what it was. They were totally helpless to this disease. Up here in Missouri, there was an Indian tribe that got smallpox. There were 30,000 Indians in that tribe, but by the time the smallpox had finished, only 30 of them were left—30 out of 30,000. And when the settlers came in, they found dead Indians inside their tents, stacked one upon another.

Now Jenner, who was trying to find some way to save the lives of people from smallpox, one time, was talking with a milkmaid, and she said, “I’m not afraid of smallpox.” She said, “I’ve already had cowpox, and now, smallpox can’t get to me.” He got to thinking: Is it possible that that we could take some of the qualities from an animal or a person from somebody else’s blood—somebody that already has an immunity—and put it in somebody else’s blood, and therefore, get the victory? And so he said, “Yes, that is true; we can do that.” And this is what science has discovered—what God, who made blood, knew all the time. Are you listening to me? The capacity... Are you ready? The capacity of one person’s blood to help protect another person, and that protected person has borrowed from the other person *wise blood*.

Listen to your pastor now. The blood of Jesus Christ is *wise blood*. Jesus took sin into Himself, and “He who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And Jesus took this sin, and He overcame sin, and He was victorious over sin.

And now because I have His blood in me, I have in me the spiritual antibody that can overcome what He overcame. And God's people said, "Amen."

Now listen. I have in me the spiritual antibody that can now overcome anything that Jesus overcame. You see, Jesus said, in John, chapter 16, verse 33: *"I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33), right? And then, what does the Bible say to us who are Christians? It speaks about the devil, in Revelation, chapter 12, and verse 11; and it says: *"And they overcame him"—the devil—"by the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 12:11). Do you see? He overcame; and now, we overcome by His blood. We have in us those spiritual antibodies that overcome the spiritual antigen of the devil.

Conclusion

What is in the blood of Jesus? Listen. See, folks, you have a need, so there are commodities in the blood. You have sins, so there's cleansing in the blood. There is an enemy—the devil himself—that would attack and invade, but you can overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, because Jesus overcame him. And you have those antibodies in you, and His shared blood is in you. "Well," you say, "very well, Mr. Pastor, but how do you get hold of it? Where do I get a transfusion? Where do I get an infusion? How is the blood of Jesus Christ made available to me?" Well, again, I want you to look again at God's Word—John, chapter 6, and verse 63: *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

Now listen. What is blood? Blood is life. What are the words? The words are life. What is Jesus Christ saying? Are you listening? Don't miss it—don't miss it. Jesus is saying that this book is to your spirit what blood is to your body. *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* You want the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to be in you? You want to eat His flesh and drink His blood? You'll never separate the Lord of the Word from the Word of the Lord. *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* Did somebody hurt you? You're resentful and bitter? It's because His word of forgiveness is not flowing through you and cleansing you. Are you full of fear and doubt? It's because His word of faith is not flowing through you. Your prayers are not answered? It is because, dear friend, the Word of God is not alive and flowing through you. How is it going to flow? It's going to flow through the Word of God. The shed blood is for forgiveness, and the shared blood is for power. There's commodity, there's cleansing, and there is conquest in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 8, 1991

Main Scripture Text: John 6:53–68

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

JOHN 6:53

Outline

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Introduction

You know, sometimes our members move away and they say, “Pastor, I cannot belong to Bellevue anymore, and I’ve moved to thus-and-such a city. Give me the name of a good church that I may attend there.” And sometimes I know a good Bible-preaching, gospel-sharing, Christ-exalting, warm fellowship, and I can recommend them to a church. But sometimes I don’t know a particular church in a community, and so I just say, “Well, you have to look and sense and see if that church is the kind of a church that you can grow and serve the Lord Jesus in.” But, dear friend, I would recommend to them, and I would recommend to you, that you find a church that makes much of these three things: the book, the blood, and the blessed hope.

Now, the book is the Bible. The blood, of course, is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. And the blessed hope is His soon coming. That’s not all there is to believe; but, dear friend, if they’re solid on those three things, I think you can say, “I believe I’ll investigate a little bit more and see if this is not the church where our Lord wants me to live and serve and grow”: the book, the blood, and the blessed hope.

Now I want us to open the book and see what the book has to say tonight about the

blood that gets us ready for the blessed hope, the Second Coming of Jesus. John chapter 6, and I begin to read in just a few moments in verse 53—John 6:53. We're talking tonight about "The Precious Blood of Jesus Christ." Here's an episode in the life of Jesus: *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed,"*—that means "food indeed"—*"and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* (John 6:53–63)

Perhaps not a deeper, more puzzling, or enigmatic passage of Scripture is to be found in all of the Bible than that which we have just read to you about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before we jump into the message with both feet, let me just tell you some things about the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That blood of Jesus that flowed through His veins was different than the blood that flows in your veins or in my veins.

A. Jesus' Blood Is Sacred Blood

His blood was sacred blood. And if you've not already written in your margin Acts 20:28, I'd like for you to jot it right down right now—Acts 20:28. The Apostle Paul, telling the Ephesian church how they were to behave after he had gone, said to them and to the elders, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,"*—and then he says—*"to feed the church of God, which he"*—who? God—*"hath purchased with his own blood"*—feed the Church of God, the Church that God purchased with His own blood. Now, whose blood therefore was shed on the cross? The blood of God: *"Feed the church of God, which [God] purchased with his own blood."*

You say, "Well, God is a spirit, and a spirit doesn't have blood." Well, God had blood when the Lord Jesus Christ was here on this earth. You see, the blood of God coursed through the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the reason for the virgin birth. The blood is determined not by the mother, but by the father. And, therefore, the mother may

have one blood type, and the baby have an entirely different blood type. The bloodline is contributed by the father. So many times people think that the blood of that embryonic child is intermingled with the blood of the mother; but not so—not so! The blood is contributed by the father—and that’s a scientific fact, my dear friend. And, therefore, since the Lord Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit of God, not one drop of Adam’s blood coursed through the veins of Jesus Christ. *“For...in Adam all die, [but] in Christ shall all be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22)

B. Jesus’ Blood Is Saving Blood

And because the blood of Jesus Christ was sacred blood, untainted blood, pure blood, sinless blood, therefore that blood could be saving blood. The Bible says we *“were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* (1 Peter 1:18–19) And it took that kind of a sacrifice—a sinless sacrifice—to redeem us. Therefore, never make light of the virgin birth. If you have no virgin birth, you have no sinless Son. If you have no sinless Son, you have no saving sacrifice. If you have no saving sacrifice, you have no new birth. If you have no new birth, you have no hope of heaven. Thank God for the virgin birth! And thank God for the sacred blood!

C. Jesus’ Blood Is Shared Blood

Now, the blood of Jesus Christ was sacred blood. And the blood of Jesus Christ is saving blood. And most good Baptists know that, but what we fail to understand is not the sacredness of the blood, and not the savingness of the blood, but what we fail to understand is that that sacred blood and that saving blood is to be shared blood—shared blood. We are to share the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that’s what our Lord is talking about here, beginning in verse 53: *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”* (John 6:53)

Now, very frankly, people, when Jesus Christ spoke to them about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, they were repulsed. The kids would say they were “grossed out.” “Eating His flesh? Drinking His blood?” they said. “We don’t understand this.” As a matter of fact, they began to leave Him and to back away from Him. Now, remember, they were Jews, and the Jews had been taught some great lessons about the blood. And the fact of eating or drinking blood was totally repugnant to them, as it should be, for here’s what God had taught. In Genesis 9:4, God said the life of the flesh is the blood. Listen to it: *“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”* God said, “Don’t do it.” And yet, here’s the Lord Jesus talking about “eating my flesh and drinking my blood.” And God said again, through Moses, in Leviticus 3:17, *“It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye*

eat neither fat nor blood.”

And may I say parenthetically here, dear friend, if you want to stay healthy, don't eat fat, and don't eat blood, if you want to stay healthy. The scientists are finally saying that the carcinogenic properties of fat cause cancer in the human body. And it is a well-known thing that the blood is a carrier of many of the diseases that are in animals that we ingest into our bodies. And our Jewish friends are very, very wise when they eat kosher meat—meat that has been killed properly. If you want to stay healthy, don't eat fat, and don't eat blood. Now you say, “That was ceremonial for the Jews.” But behind that ceremony, my dear friend, is some great medical proof. And so God said to the Jew, “Don't eat the fat, and don't eat the blood.”

Again, in Leviticus 17:11: *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls:”—*that's the saving blood, my dear friend—*“for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”* *“Without shedding of blood”—*the Bible says in the New Testament—*“is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) There's no forgiveness of sin apart from the shedding of blood. *“For the wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) And the shedding of blood means death; and, therefore, the penalty for sin is paid by the shed blood. Now again, Leviticus 17:14: *“For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.”* Sometimes when we travel in Europe, we'll stop in a restaurant, and one of the things that they put on the menu is blood sausage. I say, “No, thank you”—“No, thank you.”

When the Gentiles came into the church—who were not Jews—the Jews were trying to make the Gentiles obey the Jewish laws, all of the Jewish ceremonies. They were trying to say that Christianity could just be tacked on to Judaism. And, of course, the Gentiles rejected this, as well they should, because Christianity is not something that is simply tacked on to Judaism. But, on the other hand, the Jews were offended by some of the Gentile pagan practices such as the eating or the drinking of blood. And so they had a conference there in Acts 15. We read about it. It was called the Jerusalem Conference. And they were asking for the minimum rules that they could place upon these Gentiles so that they would not offend the Jewish believers in the church. And in Acts 15:29 here was the statement: *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols,”*—that is, “Don't eat anything that's been used in demon worship”—*“and from blood,”*—that is, “Don't drink blood”—*“and from things strangled,”*—that is, “Don't eat anything that was not properly bled”—*“and from fornication:”—*that is, “Do not live in sexual immorality”—*“from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”*

You want to fare well? Then, dear friend, don't commit fornication. You want to fare well? Don't eat anything that's been strangled and hasn't been properly bled. You want

to fare well? Don't eat blood. If you want to fare well, don't merchandise with demons. And these things are just general principles. And even today, the Orthodox Jews have their kosher food; and one of the reasons that a thing is kosher is that it has been properly killed and properly bled.

Now these are good Orthodox Jews that Jesus Christ is speaking to, and He says to them, "If you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you." Well, look in verse 60: "*Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?...*" Isn't it interesting to know that He knows our thoughts? He knows what we're talking about and murmuring about. "*Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*" Here the Lord Jesus speaks of His heavenly origin and of His ascension back to heaven. And then He explains the whole thing. Look in verse 63—here's the key to the whole thing: "*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*" (John 6:60–63) And Jesus is saying, "I'm not talking about eating my literal flesh. I'm not talking about drinking my literal blood. I have a deep spiritual meaning here: '*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*'"

You see, there is a material world, and there's a spiritual world. And in the material world are incredible lessons for the spiritual world. The material world is but an illustration of the spiritual world, and the spiritual world was here before the material world. That which is first is spiritual, and then that which is material. And so all of the material world—our material flesh, our material blood—is an illustration of a deeper spiritual truth. "*The words that I speak unto you,*"—Jesus said—"*they are spirit, and they are life.*"

Now, keep that in mind. And I want to talk to you tonight not merely about the sacrificial, saving blood of the Lord Jesus, but of the sanctifying, shared blood of the Lord Jesus, where Jesus said, "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you."

I. The Continuing Provision of the Blood

Three truths that I want to lay on your heart tonight—and the first is this: I want you to see the constant provision of the blood of Christ—the constant, or continuing, provision of the blood of Christ. Thank God I have been saved and pardoned. Thank God my sin has been atoned for. Thank God my sin is forgiven and judicially I am justified in the sight of God by His shed blood. But listen to me. Are you listening? I'm not finished with the blood of Jesus Christ when I get saved. Thank God for that. But the blood of Jesus Christ constantly provides me and is continually providing me with all that I need.

You see, what Jesus Christ is saying is that we must have life in us. Look, if you will, in verse 53: *“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”* (John 6:53) Now, let me give you a verse to put down right here. It’s Romans 5:10: *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,”*—have you got that? That’s the shed blood—*“much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”*—that’s the shared blood. Reconciled by His death: the shed blood; saved by His life: the shared blood. Do you think, my dear friend, if you simply had your sins forgiven, that’s all you need? Why, if God forgave you of every sin tonight, tomorrow you’d be in a mess again, isn’t that right? You see, not only do you need to be reconciled by His death; you need to be saved by His life. Jesus Christ gave Himself for you that He might give Himself to you. And what you need is the shared blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let’s again take the analogy of the human body. Jesus was using a physical illustration to teach a spiritual truth. Now, think of the provision of your blood in your human body. Imagine, for example, a network of rivers and canals that just cover the globe. Let’s say that it starts somewhere in the United States—we’ll say in the heart of America—and there’s a reservoir. And this network of rivers spreads out. It goes from Memphis across the Mississippi River and out through Arkansas and on out through Oklahoma right out through Arizona all the way out to California. And then, maybe we’ll say it enters a pipeline and goes under the Pacific Ocean out to Hawaii and on past there to the shores of Asia and up into the Caspian Sea and Russia. And over here it flows this way, and it goes down to Alabama, and it goes up here to New York, and it goes under the Atlantic Ocean and goes over to Europe and down to South America and across to Africa. This pipeline is going, and out of this pipeline, or this river, there are many other smaller tributaries, or smaller streams. And continually they break down maybe to ditches and canals and pipes. They just run all over the world.

And let’s imagine in these rivers and canals and pipes there are little vessels like boats that are just flowing constantly through all of these pipes. And on those little vessels—and, by the way, these pipes and these vessels are so fixed that they flow past every home, every village, every hut, every city, every hamlet everywhere; there’s not a human being on earth that one of these rivers, or streams, or pipelines doesn’t pass by—and these little vessels are in these, these little boat-like things are in these pipes. And in these little vessels, in these little boats, is whatever human beings need—mean, anything. If they need books, those books are in there. If they need food, that food is in there. If they need medicine, that medicine is in there. If they need some form of entertainment, that entertainment is in there—whatever they need! If they need clothes, the clothes are in there. And all they have to do is reach out and take whatever they need. It’s just constantly flowing by, and whatever they need to survive is there.

Now, my dear friend, that is a picture of the river of life that is flowing through your body: your bloodstream. You see, in your body are about one hundred trillion cells, and all that those cells need to survive is in your blood. It is your blood that is called by some a red river of life. And everything that is necessary for your body to survive is in little boats called blood cells that are just flowing in that plasma. And your body—those one hundred trillion cells—can reach into one of those little vessels, one of those little boats, and take out what it needs. If it needs oxygen, the oxygen is there. If it needs amino acids, they're there. If it needs nitrogen, it's there. If it needs sodium, it's there. If it needs potassium, it's there. If it needs calcium, it's there. If it needs magnesium, it is there. If it needs sugars, they are there. If it needs cholesterol—and not too many—they're there. If it needs hormones, it's all there. And the cells just simply reach out and take those things from that bloodstream.

Now you could live about two days without water. You could live probably about two or three weeks without food. But you could only live a few minutes without oxygen. And it's that oxygen that is carried by those red blood cells to those cells in your body so that you can continue to live.

Now, my dear friend, before people even discovered the circulation of the blood in the human body—and, by the way, the circulation of blood was not even discovered until the year 1615 by William Harvey—before men ever knew anything about that, God had said in the Pentateuch, the book of Leviticus, that *“the life of the flesh is in the blood.”* (Leviticus 17:11) Now, put it down, dear friend, big and plain and straight: Every cell in your body lives at the mercy of the blood. Right? Every cell in your body lives at the mercy of your blood. *“The life of the flesh is”*—what?—*“in the blood.”* And every cell in the body of Jesus lives at the mercy of His blood.

I want you to understand that now. You see, Jesus still has a body, and that body has a spirit. The spirit is the Holy Spirit. That body has members. We are members. But, oh, my dear friend, thank God that the blood of Jesus spiritually still flows through our bodies. We're not talking about the physical blood of Jesus right now. All of us could not eat His physical flesh or drink His physical blood, nor would He want us to—five or six quarts of bloods. No, no—He's talking spiritually—He's talking spiritually. But what I'm trying to say is, dear friend, in order for us to have life in us—spiritual life—thank God for the blood of Jesus.

You say, “Pastor, I never knew that before.” Well, dear friend, when I was a four-year-old boy, I didn't know anything about the blood of Jesus, either. I mean, I didn't know anything about physical blood, except that when I got cut, I bled a little. But, dear friend, that blood was still doing its work. And those of you who may be baby Christians, you may not understand what I'm telling you tonight, or you just are beginning to understand it; but the blood of Jesus has been working in you and providing life in you.

“Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood,” Jesus said, “you have no life in you.” And so, the very first thing I want to say is the continuing—the continuing—provision of the blood. Thank God—thank God—the blood continues to flow through His resurrected body.

II. The Cleansing Properties of the Blood

Now, there’s a second thing I want you to see: not only the continuing provision of the blood, but the cleansing properties of the blood—the cleansing properties of the blood. You see, the blood that flows through your body, not only does it bring to the cells of your body the things that are necessary in your body for your body to continue to exist and subsist; but, dear friend, it is the blood also that cleanses the impurities out of your body. That’s an amazing thing, because the same blood cells that bring the nutrition to the cells of your body are the same cells that carry the waste and the garbage away. It would be like having the truck that delivers the sanitized milk to carry away the garbage. God did a wonderful thing when He made the human body. But the Bible teaches that the blood cleanses.

We get things in our body called metabolites and impurities, and they have to be taken away. For example, our lungs—we take in oxygen; our lungs give off carbon dioxide. But how does the carbon dioxide get to our lungs so we can expel it out our nose and mouth? Well, it’s brought there by the blood. Our body collects a poison: uric acid. Well, how does that uric acid get to the kidneys, and how does it get purged from our bodies? Well, the blood carries it there as our blood is constantly being filtered through our kidneys. If you see a person with kidney disease, they can tell you in a moment how important it is that the blood be purified. And these people have to go for dialysis to get the poison taken out of their system—or they will quickly die.

An illustration of how the blood cleanses is something you can do yourself if you happen to be one who takes your own blood pressure. Just simply take one of those cups that the doctor uses to take your blood pressure with, and put it around your arm, and pump it up to about 240 millimeters there, and get it good and tight. And then, get a rubber ball, and begin to squeeze that rubber ball. Just exercise. Now the blood flow is cut off. And just begin to squeeze that rubber ball. For a very short time, you won’t feel anything. But then after a while, you will develop a pain; and very shortly after that, that pain will be so excruciating that you will scream out in pain, because your arm will feel a terrifying, excruciating pain.

Now, what has happened is this: that your exercising has caused energy to be burned there in your arm; and the ash, and the residue, and the garbage is not being carried off, and those poisons are building up there in that arm, and it’s causing you tremendous pain, because the blood has ceased to flow. But then you take that cup off

and you let that blood begin to flow down into that arm and back and again, and flow through your body and through your kidneys and through your lungs, and as that waste and that ash and that garbage is carried away, the pain leaves—the pain leaves. You see, your blood is a cleanser. Your blood that flows through your body is cleansing your body.

Now again, Jesus said, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are...”*—what?—*“they are spirit, and they are life.”* (John 6:63) And so He’s using a spiritual illustration. But as the physical, material blood flowing through your body cleanses your body, the spiritual blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses His Church. Now I am not saying there was no literal blood shed on that cross. There was. But I’m saying that Jesus here is going beyond that, and Jesus is saying, because of that, *“the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us”*—it cleanses us—*“from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) And the blood is continually cleansing us.

Now I’m so grateful for that. I’m so grateful that not only did He die to forgive my past sin, but, oh, dear friend, He lives to continually cleanse me and keep me clean—because day by day I need to be coming to Him, and confessing my sin, and letting the blood flow. And, by the way, if you don’t confess your sin, you know what’s going to happen? The same thing that’s going to happen right here when you put that cuff there—and you’re going to find out that the toxins of worry and envy and jealousy and fear and pride and bitterness and doubt are going to bring pain to your spirit. But when you allow the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, to flow by confession, then *“the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin.”*

III. The Conquering Power of the Blood

And what I’ve been talking to you about is the continuing provision of the blood. I’ve been talking to you about the cleansing properties of the blood. Then, there’s one last thing I want to talk to you about tonight—and it is the conquering power of the blood—the conquering power of the blood. What is the great enemy of life on earth? It’s not war, nor is it starvation—as bad as these are—but bacteria and viruses are the great enemies of mankind.

For example, in World War II, about eight-and-a-half million people died. Now, that was terrible: Eight-and-a-half million died! But the year after the armistice was signed, twenty-five million died by a flu epidemic. Now, compare twenty-five million to eight-and-a-half million. Certainly, we’re not minimizing the eight-and-a-half million; but what I’m trying to tell you is that a virus and bacteria can do more damage by far than war or starvation. In 1348, the plague hit Europe. And what had happened in Europe was this: that about a million people came to the city of Rome. They were pilgrims, and they were on a pilgrimage, and they visited Rome. But the Black Plague broke out in Rome, and

these people—these pilgrims—went back all over Europe. And when they went back all over Europe, they carried this virus, the bacteria; whatever is it that causes the plague, they carried that with them. And one third of the population of Europe died—one out of three! What a killer bacteria and viruses are to the human body!

Now, these invaders come into the body. They're like enemies that come from without, and they come into your body and into my body. We pick them up with our fingertips. We lick our hands. People sneeze on us. We get food. We sometimes cut ourselves. And these invaders—these bacteria and viral substances—come into our body. And they are enemies to our body. And it can cause this terrible sickness.

But when they come in, the blood declares war on them—primarily through the white blood cells this time, not the red blood cells. And there are about five different kinds of white blood cells. And these just gang up on any invader that comes into your body, and they declare war and assault them. There are about twenty-five billion white blood cells in your body at one time. But if you get an infection, these white blood cells are going to start to grow in rapid number. And in a high infection, you may have as many as ten times the normal white blood count, because there's an infection there. And the doctors, when they think you may be ill, or they're giving you a physical checkup, they'll prick your finger and take a smear of your blood, and they'll count the blood cells in your body. They'll count the red cells to see whether or not you're anemic, and they'll count the white cells. And if you have an inordinate amount of white cells in your body, they say, "There must be an invader," because the body is mobilizing for war. And these white cells are there to mobilize against the enemy.

Now a white cell doesn't live very long. The average white cell may live about ten hours. But some white cells live sixty or seventy years. And these are the ones that have sort of a chemical memory. They are connected with something that we call antibodies, and these antibodies—and I've always thought that's been a wrong name, because they're very much *for* your body—but these little, extremely small substances in your bloodstream called antibodies work in concert with the white blood cells, and they have the name, rank, and serial number of the bacteria and the viruses that may come into your body. When a virus comes in there, that antibody says, "Aha! That's one of them! I know him!" And they go back to the lymph glands, and they tell on that bacterium. And a great host, an army, of white blood cells who have the name, rank, and serial number of that particular virus or that particular bacterium mobilize and come to the aid. If you've ever had a boil that has festered, and you'll see there what we call puss, it's a great number of white blood cells that have mobilized and come to attack that particular infection that is there, because they come by great numbers to protect. And we can thank God for that—that they do.

Now one antibody only knows the name, rank, and serial number of one kind of

disease. For example, there's an antibody that may know about polio, or there's one that may know about measles, or one that may know about some other kind of disease. And they're experts in that particular kind of disease. Now, what happens is this: that sometimes the body will be attacked by an invader, and there will not be an antibody that has the name, rank, and serial number of that particular invader. That is, there may come some kind of a biological Scud missile, and the body has no Patriot. This bacteria comes into the body. The body has never seen this before. And so the white blood cells, they run to the lymph glands and say, "We've got something here. We've got to fight it. We've got to find out how we're going to come against it." And so your body begins to work. This internal thing that's a wonderful machine that God has made goes to work to try to get some force that can come against it to battle it. But it's taking time now. Your body is trying to put together, to synthesize, something to come against that viral infection that has come.

But sometimes the viral infection will get such a head start, because the body does not have this information already stored in it that the body dies. And it's that time gap that is so deadly. If the body does not have time to get some immune system, some unknown invader has come, there is a deadly time gap; and when that deadly time gap comes to an unknown disease hitherto unknown to the body, then of course the disease wins. It's too late to mobilize forces.

Now, that's the reason today that we immunize people, we vaccinate people. And Pasteur and Jenner and others discovered the fact that we could immunize people or vaccinate people. And what they do is to give an individual a mild force of a real disease. They find somebody who has already had that disease. And if they've already had that disease, then of course that body of the person who's already had that disease, whether they won or lost, they at least will by this time have the name, rank, and serial number of that invader. And so they take a greatly weakened form of that disease, or maybe a dead cell that still has the same basic shape, and they make some sort of a serum, a vaccine, where they can vaccinate the body, and they put that into your body.

And most of us have been vaccinated one way or another way, and all that does is to make your body a little smarter. Your body says, "Aha! Now I know what a measles invader is like. Now I know what a polio invader is like. And if that thing comes into my body, now my body has the code. My body now has the name, rank, and serial number; and therefore my body can now go to work. And my white cells and the antibodies can attack this invader and win this war. There's no time gap, and it's not going to have a chance to get me."

Now, dear friend, a person who has already had this kind of a disease and has overcome this disease, whether they overcame it naturally, or whether they overcame it

by being immunized or vaccinated, they have what some doctors call—are you listening to this?—“wise blood”: blood that has been educated.

Now, here’s the point: The blood of Jesus Christ is wise blood; His blood is wise blood. Now, you see, sin is a disease. And what kind of sin did Jesus take into His body? All sin. There’s no sin that Jesus Christ did not take into His body. I mean, the sin of the world was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The viral infection of Satan and the terrible, debilitating effects and sicknesses—spiritual sicknesses—of sin were all in the Lord Jesus Christ, in His blood. And what did the Lord Jesus Christ do? Jesus took all of that into His body and He overcame it. He became sin for us, and He overcame that sin.

Now, when I have flowing through me the spiritual blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have spiritual antibodies that can overcome anything He has already overcome. Isn’t that precious? I can overcome now anything that He has already overcome, because I have in me, flowing through me, the shared blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is wise blood. It is the blood of an overcomer. It is the blood that already has the name, rank, and serial number of every demon of hell. And, my dear friend, that blood is flowing through me, a part of the spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me give you a couple of verses that point that out. For example, in John 16:33, Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* Jesus was the overcomer. Now, put that together with Revelation 12:11—speaking of Satan: *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”*

You see, how do we overcome Satan? By the blood of the Lamb. Why are we able to overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb? Because Jesus overcame Satan. And all of Jesus’s blood now is wise blood, and that wise blood is shared blood. And that shared blood is flowing through the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, hallelujah!—listen—the devil has no temptation, the flesh has no allurements, demons have no hold that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cannot overcome. Isn’t that wonderful?

Conclusion

You see, there is the continuing provision of the blood: Every cell in the body lives at the mercy of the blood. There is the cleansing properties of the blood: Whenever we sin, *“the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) And then there’s the conquering power of the blood of Jesus. Dear friend, the devil fears the blood of Jesus Christ. *“They overcame him”—the devil—“by the blood of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 12:11) What a blessing to know that the blood will never lose its power!

Now, how does the blood of Jesus Christ flow in us? We need the blood for

provision. We need the blood for pardon. We need the blood for victory. But how does the blood flow? Now we know how the blood saves. We come to the Lord, and we say, “Lord, you promised to save me. You died for my sins. I repent of my sin and trust you with all of my heart once and for all, now and forever, in much as in me is. I trust you—you only, you always—to forgive my sin. On the basis of your shed blood my sin is paid for by your blood. I accept what you did. Thank you, Lord. Save me. Forgive me. Save me and keep me.” And, therefore, the saving blood does its work.

But how is the shared blood—how is the shared blood—applied to your heart and to your life? Well, look again in John 6, where we began, and look in verse 61: “*When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?*” He said, “If you think this is something, wait till you see the ascension.” And then He says this—and watch in verse 63. Here’s the secret. Here’s the key to the whole thing. Don’t miss it—“*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing...*”—so I’m not talking about fleshly, bodily blood at this point. Remember, there were only five or six quarts of blood in the body of Jesus. Not all of us could eat that if we wanted to—and we certainly don’t want to. That’s not what He’s talking about. He’s talking spiritually. But now, watch it—“*the flesh profiteth nothing:*”—now, here’s the key—“*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” (John 6:61–63)

Now, go back to verse 53: “*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*” (John 6:53) And then Jesus says in verse 63, “*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” Now, what does all of this mean? The Word of God—do I have your attention?—the Word of God is to your spirit what blood is to your body. Did you hear that? The Word of God is to your spirit what blood is to your body. “*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” The Word is spirit and life. The Word of God is to our spirits what blood is to our body.

Now we need to let His Word flow through our lives and our spirit like blood flows through our veins. That means, my dear friend, to feed on His Word. To share His blood is the same thing. To share His blood is to read the Word. To share His blood is to heed His Word. To share His blood is to hear and to keep His commandments. That’s the reason the Lord Jesus said in John 15:7, “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” Let the Word of God just live in you and abide in you. This book is not just like any other book. “*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” Listen to John 14:23: “*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*” How do you do that? By keeping His Word. Jesus said in Mark 13:31, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but*

my words shall not pass away.” See, my dear friend, you must feed on the Word of God. And I don’t mean simply reading the Bible; I mean heeding the Bible, assimilating the Bible, living by the Bible.

Now in John 6, Peter finally locked you. You can depend upon Peter to open his mouth and say something. Look, if you will, in verse 66: *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”* I mean, when Jesus talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, there were many who just checked out. They left. *“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”* (John 6:66–68) Do you see it? Peter understood it: “Lord, yes, yes, the Word: that is eternal life. You have it, Lord Jesus.”

Listen to this pastor. Oh, my dear friend, there is safety in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is strength in the shared blood. The shed blood makes us safe; the shared blood makes us strong. The Christian life begins by coming under the blood for salvation; it continues by sharing the blood for cleansing and for strength. And, to me, that is a great, great truth.

I heard some time years ago about a Sunday School class of little girls. And the teacher asked this question: “Is there anything God cannot do?” That’s a deep question: “Is there anything God cannot do?” And a little girl lifted her hand, and she said, “Yes, teacher, I know something God cannot do.” And the teacher said, “What is it?” And this little girl rightly said, “God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Oh, dear friend, is your sin under the blood? I mean, have you come to the place where you’ve accepted Christ as your personal Savior? If not, tonight you need to do that. And if you have done it, then tonight you need to let the Word of God richly dwell in you, because as the Word of God richly dwells in you, do you know what you’re doing? You are eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ. You are sharing His blood. Not only is there an infusion there is a transfusion of life as you abide in Christ.

Why Did Jesus Choose Judas?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 5, 1997

Main Scripture Text: John 6:63–71

“He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.”

JOHN 6:71

Outline

Introduction

- I. Religious Hypocrisy and the Need of Salvation
- II. Divine Sovereignty and the Reliability of Scripture
- III. Personal Responsibility and the Tragedy of Sin
- IV. The New Birth and the Security of the Believer

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, let's turn to the Word of God. Would you open your Bibles to John chapter 6, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 71. And, as you're turning to that, let me ask you a question. Don't lift your hand, but just answer in your heart: how many of you know a man or a boy named John? Well, how many of you know a man named James? Or a boy named Matthew? Or one perhaps named Philip. Or maybe someone named Andrew. Or maybe someone named Paul. I think most of us would say, yes, I know somebody with all of those names. I want to ask you another question: how many of you know a man or a boy named Judas? Probably not a one. You might know a goat named Judas, maybe a dog named Judas, but you don't know a boy or man named Judas. And, if you do, it would be a very rare name. But once there was a mother who held a little baby boy in her arms, and kissed that baby face, and called her little baby Judas. And she loved him with all of her heart. But now the name Judas is a name of infamy. It's a name of disgrace. It's the name of treachery. And yet, Jesus chose Judas. Look with me now in verse 63: "Jesus said it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life, but here are some of you that believe not." Now, that's a key, underscore that: "But there are some of you,"—He's talking to His disciples—"there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto

me except it were given unto him of my Father. And from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon answered him and said, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?" Literally the word is a demon. "He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was, for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." He was one of the twelve disciples! Jesus chose him.

Now, the scene is the garden of Gethsemane. The night is dark. Jesus is praying till the sweat is on that blessed brow like drops of blood. He is in anguish, His disciples are asleep, they could not watch and pray with Him. And suddenly there's a sound, muffled voices, clanking armor, shuffling footsteps, lighted torches. That secret prayer place now is just filled with people. The priests are there. Their eyes are burning with hatred and anger. And from that crowd there steps a man—his name is Judas. He has a sickening grin on his face, but he cannot hide the treachery in his eyes. He steps forward, and he plants a kiss on the altogether lovely and pure cheek of Jesus, and he hisses out in hypocrisy, Greetings, Master. As the King James says, Hail, Master. And that kiss must've burned like a coal from hell. It was the kiss of betrayal. It was the kiss of death.

Now, how did all of this happen? Did all of this take Jesus by surprise? I mean, after all, Jesus chose this man. Was Jesus a bad judge of character? Did Jesus make a mistake? Friend, He never made one mistake. The Bible says He doeth all things well. He knew exactly, precisely, what He was doing when He chose Judas. Question: well then, why did He choose him? Why would He put a crook in the ministry? Why would He want a dirty double-crosser to represent Him? Who would want a man like this on his team, with eyes wide open, knowing that He would be betrayed? Well, that's a good question. I think it's got a good answer, and I think that you're going to find today like all of the Scripture, that you're going to find in the answer a word of warning, you're going to find in the answer a word of assurance, and you're going to find a word of comfort. As we look in this passage, and we ask ourselves, and we look at related passages, and we ask ourselves, why did Jesus choose Judas?

I. Religious Hypocrisy and the Need of Salvation

Here's the first thing. There are four thoughts today. The very first thing I want you to see is a lesson concerning religious hypocrisy—religious hypocrisy—and the need of true salvation. Now, look, if you will, in verse 64: "Jesus said, But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray him." By the way, as He looks at this congregation today, He knows who the true believers are. He knows the difference. There are some of you

sitting here today, you're going through the motions—you look just like everybody else. But there's a line that divides people today—those who believe and those who believe not. Now, He's not talking about intellectual belief. The word belief here means heart trust. Jesus knew who trusted Him and Jesus knew who did not trust Him. Well, if you don't trust Him, you're not saved, for the Bible says, in Acts chapter 16 and verse 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Now, listen very carefully, because this is the word of warning. Because there are many today who are in exactly the same crowd that Judas was in. You see, Judas had the right stuff. I mean, Judas had the right stuff. If you looked at Judas, you would've said, What a great guy this man Judas is.

For example, he had the right associations. Didn't he rub shoulders with the other eleven? That's pretty good company, isn't it? He was intimate with Jesus. Jesus called him friend. He spent three and a half years in the best seminary in the world, studying with the Lord Jesus Christ, learning facts, hearing Jesus Christ talk. What association this man had. And I'll tell you, not only did he have the right associations; he had the right reputation. Now, when Jesus was at the last supper, and He said one of you is going to betray me, the people didn't say, Oh, I know who it is—it must be Judas. The truth of the matter is, if they thought it was anybody, they probably thought it was Peter. Jesus said, One of you is going to betray me. They said, is it I? Am I the one that's going to do that, Lord? Let me tell you how much they trusted Judas. Do you know what job Judas had? Judas was the treasurer. Judas was the treasurer of that little group. The Bible said he held the bag; he was the man that had the money bag. Now, who do you make treasurer? The person who has the most integrity outward, the person that you respect the most. I'm saying that he had the right association, he had the right reputation; and, I'll tell you something else: he had the right participation. He was a worker. He went out with the others when they went out to teach and to preach and to do good. He was right in the group.

Got a lot of folks like that in church this morning. You're in a Bible-believing church; you've got good association. You've got good reputation; everybody thinks you're a wonderful person, and you may be outwardly. You were doing a lot of good things. You may be singing in the choir this morning, you may be taking the offering this morning, you may be teaching a Sunday school class this morning, you may be doing something wonderful, but Jesus said, "Many will say unto me"—this is in Matthew chapter 7, verse 22—"Many will say unto 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." That ought to be a warning. I want you to listen very carefully. The devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than he had from the gutter. Many people trudge to

church on Sundays who have never been born again. Nobody suspected Judas. Judas, are you saved? I'm a church member. I didn't ask you that, Judas—are you saved? I am a member of the best church, the one Jesus founded. I didn't ask you that, Judas—are you saved? I'm a charter member! Didn't ask you that, Judas—are you saved? I'm the treasurer! You can go to hell surrounded by receipts for church offerings, baptismal certificates, and Sunday School pins, my friend.

Listen to me—what a warning this is. So many people have a form of godliness but they denied the power thereof, and that's the reason the Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be of the faith." Don't think that because you're religious that you're going to heaven. It was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus! What a warning that ought to be to all of us!

But I'll tell you something else. Not only is it a warning; it is an encouragement. Now, how could that be an encouragement? I'll tell you how that's an encouragement: because the other eleven did not quit serving the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't you let some Judas send you to hell. Don't you let some hypocrite keep you from loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Every so often, somebody will say, Did you know that there are hypocrites in the church? I say, Do tell. I'm so glad you told me. I would never have known that, after forty-five years in the ministry, that there are hypocrites in the church. There have been, there will be—the Bible clearly prophesies it. The enemy sows the tares among the wheat. We bought some eggs a while back, and one of them was a hypocrite. The other eleven were all right. You are going to find, dear friend, that hypocrites come and go, and like leaches, they cling to the hull of the good ship Zion, and onward she plows. And don't you let some hypocrite keep you out of heaven.

And you know when hypocrisy really hurts is when it's in the ministry, doesn't it? That's when it really hurts. No telling how many people are going to go to hell because of the scandals with some television preachers. A while back, you remember all of that? I don't need to uncover all that and go into all of that. But, let me just think with you for a moment. Have you ever been out at nighttime with a beautiful sky up there, and then you see something blaze across the sky. Everybody says, Look! A falling star! And it hits the atmosphere. What it is, is really not a star at all; it's a chunk of rock; and it hits the atmosphere, and it glows, and it blazes, and it burns up, and burns out. It's a chunk of rock. Do you know why it's significant? Do you know why people say, Look, look? I'll tell you why they say that: it's because stars don't normally fall. Now, listen very carefully. Every time somebody points out some scoundrel in the ministry, and every time somebody says, Look, it's only a testimony to the fact that God's preachers around the world are standing true for the Lord Jesus Christ like the stars of heaven.

Somebody was telling me the other day, Oh, all of the scandal in the ministry—and one is too many. But I said to a friend, I said, Name twenty. He couldn't name five. Name

twenty. Friend, there are hundreds of thousands of men preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of them in little back road country churches, underpaid, overworked and unappreciated, who love Jesus with all of their heart. You stay up late some night and watch Elmer Gantry, or some movie like that, on television, and you say, Oh, yeah, whole bunch of hypocrites. Well, I want to tell you, Judas was a hypocrite, but Peter wasn't, and Andrew wasn't; James wasn't, and John wasn't. He's not, and they're not, and I'm going to tell you, be bold enough to tell you, I'm not. I love Jesus with all of my heart, and don't you let some Judas keep you from serving and loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you something else. We're still on the subject of salvation. What a warning this ought to be as to the ineptitude and the weakness of the social gospel. Did you know when this episode just took place, in John chapter 6? Jesus had just fed five thousand people. He fed the five thousand, and the crowds were clamoring after Him, and the Lord Jesus now begins to talk to him. He says, get it in focus. Look, if you will, in verse 47 of this same chapter—look at it. He says here, "Verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven." Folks, every time you begin to preach the gospel, build a building to preach the gospel in, somebody says, Oh, why don't you give that money to feed the poor? I am feeding the poor. The bread of life! They need Jesus! If you were to buy everybody on earth a hamburger, it would cost you 12 to 18 billion dollars. In a few hours they'd be hungry again. I'm not against feeding the poor—Jesus did it, and we ought to do it—but oh, how the devil has taken a gospel which is called a social gospel which is not a gospel at all, and failed to preach that men need more than soup and soap; they need salvation. They need the Lord Jesus Christ; they need to be born again; they need Jesus, the bread of life. So many churches today have become glorified country clubs, and they have their social programs, but they're not preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and all they're doing is making the world a better place to go to hell from.

Friend, we have to live somewhere—in heaven or hell—forever. And Jesus here chose this man, Judas, I think, to help us understand, to help us understand religious hypocrisy, and the need of true salvation. Jesus knew who they were that believed not. I mean, think about it, folks: the social gospel. What difference does it make if a man's educated in a progressive school? What difference does it make if he wears soft clothes? What difference does it make if he eats vitamin-enriched food? What difference does it make if he sleeps on a soft mattress? What difference does it make if he dies without pain without the high-powered drugs? What difference does it make if he's buried in a memorial cemetery as beautiful as any park? What difference will it make if he must rise in the judgment and face a God he does not know? I'm not opposed to

these other things; we ought to do everything we can do to help alleviate human hurt; but God forbid if we should ever fail to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Environment is not enough. Jesus gave Judas a wonderful environment. Man got in trouble in the Garden of Eden.

II. Divine Sovereignty and the Reliability of Scripture

Now, here's the second thing I want you to learn: not only a lesson concerning religious hypocrisy and the need of salvation, but there's a lesson concerning divine sovereignty and the reliability of Scripture—divine sovereignty. Now, look, if you will, in verse 64. You're in John chapter 6 and verse 64: "There are some of you that believe not, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray him." Now, go over to John chapter 13—just turn a few pages there, and look with me in verse 18. Jesus now is speaking of one who needed to be saved, and He said, "I speak not of you all. I know whom I've chosen," now watch this, "but that the scripture may be fulfilled"—don't miss that—"that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Jesus there is quoting Psalm 41, verse 9: "He that hath eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Now, watch this: "Now, I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass ye may believe that I am he." Who? The Messiah. Jesus said, Look, I've chosen you. I know whom I've chosen. I know there's one who doesn't believe. He's a demon, but He said long ago in the Scripture, the Scripture said that this would happen. This is not an accident; this is not as though something has gone wrong. Divine sovereignty has seen through the ages this would take place. And He says this is being done that the Bible, the Scripture, will be fulfilled. And He said, when you see it, then you can know that I am the Messiah. Did you know that Judas preached a wonderful message that Jesus is the Messiah, for this ungodly rascal? But that, you see, when man rules, God overrules. Did Judas have a choice? Of course he did! Was Judas forced to betray Jesus? Of course not! God gave him a choice. He wanted him saved. Jesus loved him. Jesus would have forgiven him. Jesus would have saved him. Then, you say, if that is true, then, how was it prophesied what he would do? That means he didn't have a chance. Oh yes, he had a chance; of course he did. Do you think God would've crippled him, and then blamed him for limping? No!

Here's the thing, dear friend: when man rules, God overrules. What we see one point at a time, God sees all at one time. Did you know there's one thing God can't do, and that's learn anything? Think about it. God can't learn anything. How could God learn anything? He knows everything. How can you be omniscient and learn anything? God knew exactly precisely what Judas would do before Judas did it. Did Judas have a choice? Absolutely! Did God know it? Yes! Did God know it before time? Yes! Did God

overrule it? Yes! Is God still in charge? Yes! It's amazing thing. Human responsibility and divine sovereignty. You and I dwell in time. God dwells in eternity; the past, the present and the future are all alike to Him.

Now, there's a word of warning. Watch religious hypocrisy. There is a word of assurance. Nothing is out of control. Nothing. Nothing. God knows exactly precisely everything that will happen, and I'm going to tell you, friend, we're on the winning side. Jesus shall reign, where the sun doth his successive journeys run, His kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moon shall wax and wane no more.

III. Personal Responsibility and the Tragedy of Sin

Third lesson I want us to learn: not only the lesson of divine sovereignty and the reliability of Scripture, but personal responsibility and the tragedy of sin. We've already said Judas was responsible for what he did. He was not a machine. He was not forced to do this. The Bible tells us clearly that Judas was a thief. Go back to John chapter 6, and look, if you will, in verse 64 again—John chapter 6 and verse 64: "But there be some of you that believe not, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not." And then, look, if you will again, in 70 and 71: "Jesus answered, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a demon, a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." Now, Judas was a thief; he betrayed the Lord Jesus, he sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Sin had deceived Judas; after he realized what he had done, after he realized how deceived he had been by sin, the Bible says that he went to the Chief Priests and the elders and gave them his thirty pieces of silver back, and he said, I have betrayed innocent blood. The deed that he'd done hangs over his mind like a veil of death. It gnaws away at his conscience; it brings him to despair. Sin deceived him. Sin promised much; it paid little. The former pastor of this church, Dr. R. G. Lee, used to say, You can eat the devil's corn if you want to, but he'll choke you on the cob. That's what happened to Judas. The bread of deceit is sweet, but afterward, a man's mouth shall be filled with gravel. His sin deceived him, and sin will deceive you, friend.

Not only did his sin deceive him; his sin destroyed him. He took that thirty pieces of silver back to the court, and said to those priests, Take it back, threw it on the ground and it rolled across the courtyard. They picked it up after he was gone to buy a field to bury paupers with. Judas slinked away into the night. We don't know exactly how it happened, but we can piece some things together. He has remorse of soul, anguished of mind—he's fearful; and, you see, the devil who had enticed him is now the devil who's condemning him, and the devil who's accusing him. Judas is not under Holy Spirit conviction now; he's under remorse—and there's a difference. And he goes out there, and, somewhere hanging over some cliff, he finds a scraggly limb, and with trembling

fingers, he forms a hangman's noose. He puts that noose around his neck, and then he steps over that cliff. Trying to escape the hell within him, he steps into the hell before him. The rope tightens, he hangs there, the breath is gone, the heart stops, but his soul is still in existence. He hangs there one day, two days, three, four—who knows how many?—dangling at the end of that rope. His body begins to bloat, gases build up, the birds have picked the eyes from their sockets, his tongue is swollen and covered with flies, the stench is terrible; it's a ghastly sight. There, dangling from the end of that rope, finally, somebody comes and sees him, and takes a sword, and just backs up, and cuts him down, and the body falls to the ground below, hits on the rocks, and it bursts like an overripe melon, and the entrails fall out on the ground. You say, good night, pastor—who wants to hear that on Sunday morning? That's not pretty. I didn't mean for it to be pretty. Sin is not pretty. His sin deceived him; his sin destroyed him. And the devil is guilty of false advertising. Judas, where are your friends now? Judas, where's your silver now? Judas, where's your power now? The Bible says, in Acts chapter 1, verse 18, "Now, this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." I wasn't making that up—write it down—Acts 1, verse 18: And he did hang himself. Matthew 27, verse 5: "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

And not only did his sin deceive him, and his sin destroyed him; his sin damned him. Judas did not end his life when he hung himself. People say, Well, I'm going to commit suicide and end it all. You can't end it all—you can't end it all. The Bible says, in Acts chapter 1, verse 25, that Judas, by transgression, fell, that he might go to his own place—that he might go to his own place. He didn't end it all; he went to his own place. There's a place in hell.

Now, what have we talked about? We have talked about hypocrisy and the need of salvation; we have talked about sovereignty and that God is in control; and now, we talk about tragedy and human responsibility, that Judas chose and he chose wrong.

C. S. Lewis is one of the finest thinkers of our generation. He's in heaven now. But C. S. Lewis said, basically, there are two types of people on Planet Earth. There are those like Jesus who say to God the Father, Not my will, but thine be done; those follow the Lamb, they love Him, they're saved, they're born again. And then, there's another category of persons; these are like Satan—not like Jesus, but like Satan—who say to God the Father, Not thy will, but mine be done. There may be some like that in this building today. There may be some who are watching by television like that. You say, Hey, don't put that stuff on me. I'm going to live; it's my life; not thy will, mine be done. Two categories of persons: those who are like Jesus, and say, Not my will, but thine, be done; those who are like Satan, who say, Not thy will, but mine, be done. Now, Lewis

said, when those who say to God, Not thy will, but mine, be done, when they drop into hell, a brokenhearted God will say, Not my will, but thine, be done—not my will. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But God gave you a choice—God gave you a choice. God gave me a choice. God gave you a choice. God gave Judas a choice. God knew what choice he would make, but nonetheless he had a choice, and he blew it! And he died and went to hell; he went to his own place. Sin deceived him; sin destroyed him; sin damned him.

IV. The New Birth and the Security of the Believer

And one last thing I want us to see in the few minutes we have: I want us to see not only the tragedy of sin, but I want us to see the security of the believer. You know, every now and then, somebody will say, You know, Pastor Rogers, one of the reasons I can't believe in eternal security is because of Judas: Judas lost his salvation. Have you been listening, folks? Judas never had any salvation. Judas never was saved. The Bible says, in verse 64, "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not." Now, there's a great difference that day between Judas and Simon Peter. Look down in verse 67: "And Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," now watch this, "and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Two categories there that day: Judas, outwardly religious but had never had a new birth, had never been born again; and Simon Peter, rough, stumbling, but he was there, and God kept him. Look, if you will; go back; and look in verse 37—chapter 6, verse 37—watch this: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me"—now, watch this—"and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Isn't that great? That was a good place for an amen. All right now, look in verse 47, if you will: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me"—now, remember, Judas didn't believe—"Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers who did eat manna in the wilderness are dead. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die."

Why do I believe in eternal security? Because again, in John chapter 10, just a few verses later, 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. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." What was the difference between Judas and Peter? If you read when you get home Luke chapter 22, you're going to find out in that chapter that Jesus said one's going to betray me, and one's going to deny me. Judas betrayed Jesus, and went to hell. Peter denied Jesus, and he's in heaven. What was the difference? Jesus said of Judas, it had been good for

that man he'd never been born. Now, listen. If you don't get born twice, you're going to rue the day you were ever born at all. "Been good for that man he'd never been born." The Bible says he died, and went to his own place. But, what about Peter? Jesus said, Peter, Satan has desired you that he may sift you as wheat, but I've prayed for you that your faith fail not. Isn't that great? Did Jesus ever pray a prayer that wasn't answered? Of course not! He said, Father, I thank you, you always hear me. You see, the soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will never, no never, desert to expose. That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake. You and I, had we been there, we'd have said, Oh, Peter, he's lost. But, you know, Peter loved Jesus. Weak, stumbling, but he said, we believe, and are sure that you're the Christ. Do you believe that?

Conclusion

Let me tell you something, folks. You need to put your faith where God has put your sins: right on Jesus—right on Jesus. Clearly, plainly, wonderfully, simply, gloriously, the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." One last word, and we're going to sing an invitation. You say, Well, Pastor Rogers, I am not a Judas. I'm glad you're not. I'm going to tell you this: if you don't get saved, you're in the same category as Judas. There are only two categories of people in the world: the saved and the lost. That's all. Matthew chapter 12, verse 30—Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad." You can't be on the fence. You're in the Simon Peter crowd, or you're in the Judas crowd, and the difference is faith. Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. Simon Peter said, we believe and are sure that you are the Son of God. And Jesus said, when a man believes on me, I will in no wise cast him out. Now, that doesn't mean that God won't chastise you. It doesn't mean He won't carry you to the woodshed. But it does mean, dear friend, that if you give your heart to Jesus, He will save you, and He will keep you safe. If you truly trust Him—I'm not talking about just being religious like Judas; I'm talking about truly trusting Him.

So, there's a message concerning hypocrisy; there's a message concerning sovereignty; there's a message concerning responsibility; there's a message concerning security. Maybe that's why Jesus chose Judas.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, O God, we humble ourselves today. Lord, I pray that many in this building will say an everlasting yes to Jesus. Lord, many who are stumbling and weak like old Simon Peter, Lord, that they just might come, and say yes to Jesus, and trust Him, and be saved. O God, open hearts. Lord, they cannot come apart from the work of your dear Holy Spirit; so, draw them, Lord, to you. Open hearts; save souls, I pray. This is your work, Lord. Amen.

Why I Believe in Jesus Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 13, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 6:67–69

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

JOHN 6:68–69

Outline

Introduction

- A. Atheism Is Not the Answer
- B. Philosophy Is Not the Answer
- C. Materialism Is Not the Answer
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- E. Jesus Christ Alone Is the Answer
- I. I Believe in Jesus for Historical Reasons
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Conclusion

Introduction

Some time ago I had one of the most challenging experiences of my life. I was in Moscow, the capital of the former Soviet Union, and I had the opportunity to preach. And I preached in a marvelously beautiful hall. It was called the Red Army Theater. It was a theater for the performing arts. It was a place where they held operas and cultural events, a magnificent structure with a big stage.

First of all, I had to thank God for the privilege to be there; and, frankly, spiritually, I was trusting the Lord; but, in the flesh, I was intimidated to be there, because there, in that Red Army Theater, there were those massive portraits of Lenin and Stalin. There's the velvet box up there where they would sit to listen to the performances. There in that auditorium were soldiers, army officers, and their wives. The soldiers were all dressed in their military uniforms, and they were sitting out there, rank upon rank upon rank. And God had given me the privilege to preach to them.

First of all, I said, “Lord, how did this happen? How did I get here?” I won't take time to tell you about the circumstance that placed me there, but I realized it was a great

challenge because these soldiers, these army officers, had been taught from their youth there is no God. They were raised in an atheistic society. Not only that, they were raised to hate Americans. I wondered how much of that might still remain in that auditorium. And this place was built to glorify communism and totalitarianism to the degree that they named it the Red Army Theater.

Now, what would you preach if you had an opportunity to preach to a group like that? I mean, what would be the subject matter? What would you say? I knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Never again would I have an opportunity like that. I knew it would be the first time, and perhaps the only time, some of them would ever hear a message from God.

I prayed, asked God, “Lord, what would you have me to say to these people?” God the Holy Spirit said, “Adrian, tell them about Jesus. Tell them why you believe in Jesus Christ.” That’s what I talked to them about. And here’s the text that I took—John chapter 6, verse 66: *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (John 6:66–69) Peter said, *“We believe, and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

And I said to those men and their wives assembled, “I want to tell you why I believe in Jesus Christ, and I want to tell you, along with Simon Peter, why I am sure that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And I gave them four reasons that are found in this chapter. They are the same reasons I want to give to you, many of you who are already sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, in order to reinforce your faith and to help you to share with others, because we live in a shrinking world, because many have never heard the gospel that we’ve heard, and many do not take for granted the things today that we take for granted.

Jesus had just fed the five thousand, and there were miracles that He performed that caused people to follow after Him, and especially when He fed the five thousand with a few fish and loaves. But then as the multitudes were following Jesus, Jesus turned to them and began with a challenging message to talk about eating His flesh and drinking His blood—that is, to partake of Him. The message was so stark, the message was so different, it was so radical, the people began to leave. They were miracle mongers. They liked the loaves and the fish, but they did not like the deeper message that was behind that miracle, and they began to leave Him.

And then Jesus turned to His disciples, and He said, “Are you going to go away also?” And Peter asked a very penetrating question—and it’s the question I’m going to ask you: “If not Jesus, then what?” “If not Jesus, then who?” Simon Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” I mean, friend, if Jesus isn’t the answer, if you turn from Jesus,

where are you going to go?

A. Atheism Is Not the Answer

Are you going to turn from Him to atheism? Are you going to believe that in the beginning the heavens and the earth created themselves, and then created man?

I said to these former atheists, “Atheism does not make sense. It’s not a sign of intelligence.” I reminded them of what I remind you: “The intelligentsia of the ages have believed in God. Socrates, Bacon, Galileo, Newton, Pasteur, Einstein, Wernher von Braun—they all believed in God. Can you turn to atheism?”

B. Philosophy Is Not the Answer

Then I asked them a question: “Are you going to turn to philosophy—if you reject Jesus Christ—philosophy, a system that tells us what we already know in words we can’t understand?” A former pastor of this church, Dr. R. G. Lee, said, “Philosophy is a chunk of cloudbank buttered with the night wind.” Study the great philosophers and see if philosophy satisfied their heart. Schopenhauer, one of the greatest, said, “Life is a curse of endless craving and endless unhappiness.” Aldous Huxley said, concerning us, he said, “It seems like we are a cancer on the globe.” Bertrand Russell didn’t believe in God. He called himself a philosopher. But Bertrand Russell at the end of his life said, “Philosophy proved a washout to me.” H. G. Wells tried philosophy, and H. G. Wells said this: “Unless there is a more abundant life before mankind, this scheme of space and time is a bad joke...an empty laugh braying across the mysteries.” I asked those men, “Are you going to turn to philosophy?”

C. Materialism Is Not the Answer

Then I asked this question: “Are you going to turn to materialism? Is that the answer? If not atheism and philosophy, is it materialism? Is that where you’re going to go? Do you think that things can satisfy you?”

I went into the mayor’s office in Moscow. I went up that red carpet, walked across those marble floors, went into that big conference room, sat down there with the leadership of the heart of Moscow, looked across the table from those men, and I said, “Sirs, I want to tell you something. The Soviet Empire has dissolved, as such. Communism has come crumbling down. But,” I said, “if you follow the West with economic ideas, and that’s all, and you say capitalism is the answer rather than communism,” I said, “both capitalism and communism are two forms of materialism, and they will never satisfy the deepest longing of your hearts. God made you for God. He made you for Himself. And even if you have material things, you will still find your hearts and lives empty.” They nodded their heads.

And, by the way, we gave them some good books, some Bibles, some books by C.

S. Lewis, some books on the home by James Dobson, and some other things to help

these men to begin to build their lives on the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Religion Is Not the Answer

Will you turn to materialism? Is that the answer? Or will you turn to false religions? You know, man is incurably religious, and if he goes away from Jesus Christ, he's going to go to some other false religion. But remember what Peter said to Jesus? "To whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68)

If you go to Confucius' grave, it will be occupied. If you go to Buddha's grave, it will be occupied. If you go to Mohammed's grave, it will be occupied. If you go to Jesus' grave, it's empty. It's empty! Jesus came out of that grave. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have Buddhism. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still have Confucianism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam, and still, basically, nothing has changed. But you can't take Jesus out of Christianity and still have Christianity.

Christianity is not just a creed, or a code, or a cause, or a church. It is Christ. It is a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. And Simon Peter asked this question: "Well, where should we go?" We go to atheism. We go to philosophy. We go to materialism. We go to false religions. "Where shall we go? You alone have the answer."

E. Jesus Christ Alone Is the Answer

Now, let me tell you something about Jesus Christ. People, listen to me. Those of you who are listening on television, listen to me. Jesus Christ alone—only Jesus—has the answer to the things that really matter. Only Jesus can meet the deepest hunger of the human heart. Only Jesus is the answer to man's sin. Only Jesus gives meaning to life and death. Only Jesus can take the sting out of sin, the gloom out of the grave, the pain out of parting, and give hope that is steadfast and sure. To whom shall we go? He alone has the answers of life and death.

But that brings a question: How do we know that Jesus is who we say He is? Why do we believe in Jesus? Why have I given my life to Him? Why do I serve Him? Why would I be willing to die for Him, if necessary? Why? Four reasons. Four reasons that we can know and be sure that "*we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (John 6:69)

I. I Believe in Jesus for Historical Reasons

The first reason that I shared with these, and I share with you, is the historical reason. Jesus Christ is a fact of history.

Now I don't care whether you're a believer or whether you're not a believer, whether you're a Christian or someone else, you must admit, you have to admit, the man named Jesus was here upon this earth. All of the secular historians that have any merit at all

admit the fact of Jesus Christ, regardless of what they believe about Him. H. G. Wells, in his book *The Outline of History* listed the ten greatest men of history, and number one on the list was Jesus Christ. He's a historian. Sir J. G. Frazer, a historian—you certainly wouldn't call him an evangelical Christian, a born-again Christian—said this—and listen to it: "My theory assumes the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth as a great religious and moral teacher, who founded Christianity and was crucified in Jerusalem under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. The testimony of the Gospels, confirmed by the hostile evidence of Tacitus and the younger Pliny, appears amply sufficient to establish these facts to the satisfaction of unprejudiced inquirers."

What's he saying? He's saying, if you're a historian, you have to admit that the man Jesus, regardless of what else you think about Him, He was here. We live in a day called 1995 AD—the year of our Lord. His birth and life splits history. Every time you put your date on a check or on a letter, you're giving testimony to the fact that a man named Jesus of Nazareth was here. Regardless of what you think about Him, He is a fact of history.

There's no way to explain the Christian church, the fact that we are here, apart from the fact that Jesus Christ was here. And what did the early church begin to preach? Not only that the man was here, but that man walked out of the grave. That was the central fact of the preaching of the early church. How do you explain that? How do you explain, not our church today, but that church back yonder that grew out of the life and times of Jesus Christ? Those who were eyewitnesses, they believed in His resurrection.

Someone says, "Well, they were hallucinating." Well, He appeared to more than five hundred at one time. That's a lot of hallucination. Somebody says, "Well, He was a ghost." No. He ate with them. They felt Him. They touched Him. Somebody says, "Well, they just made up a story. They said they touched Him. They said they ate with Him." Oh, these men who died for their faith? Do you think they would die for a lie willingly, knowingly? A man may live for a lie, but few may die for a lie. These early Christians paid with their lives for their faith.

How do you explain the historical fact of Jesus Christ and the church apart from the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? I believe in Him for historical reasons. It has well been said, "There is more proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead than that Julius Caesar lived." He was shown "*to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead,*" (Romans 1:4) and the Bible says He showed Himself alive with "*many infallible proofs.*" (Acts 1:3) Let me give you some Scripture. Look, if you will, in John chapter 6, verse 38. This deals with the historical fact: "*For I came down from heaven.*" (John 6:38) He was here. That's the historical fact.

II. I Believe in Jesus for Scriptural Reasons

Now, let me give you the second reason I believe in Him. Not only for historical reasons, but I believe in Him for scriptural reasons. Look, if you will now, in chapter 6, verse 44. This Jesus who came down from heaven said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.”* (John 6:44–45)

Now, here’s the second reason: not only the historical reason, but the biblical, the scriptural, reason. I told those men, and I tell you today, that I believe in Jesus Christ because I believe the Bible, the Word of God. “Well,” you say, “Pastor, that just moves the question back a little bit, because to say that you believe in Jesus Christ because you believe the Bible causes us to ask, how do we know the Bible is true?” That’s a good question. And I talked to those men, and I said, “I want to tell you...”—and to those ladies, and to those Russian soldiers, and army officers—“I want to tell you why I believe the Bible is the Word of God.” And I took time to explain to them how I know that the Bible is the Word of God. And I gave them the great five proofs of the inspiration of the Holy Scripture.

And what are they? Number one: fulfilled prophecy. Number two: the wonderful unity of the Bible—written over fifteen hundred years by at least forty different authors in three different languages on all kinds of subjects; sixty-six books that make one book—the wonderful unity of the Bible. I talked to them about the longevity of the Bible, how the Bible has lasted through the centuries, and how men have made laws against it, and how over there in Soviet Russia it was a crime to bring Bibles into Soviet Russia. And I reminded them, every one of them there, that I had a Bible to give them when they left. And they broke out in applause—to give to them the Word of God. How do you explain the longevity, the ever-living quality, of the Bible? I talked to them about the accuracy of the Bible, and the scientific and the historical accuracy of the Bible. Then I talked to them about the power of the Bible. Jesus said, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* (John 6:63) He said that in this sixth chapter. And I told them how the reading of God’s Word had transformed my life. And I told them that we know the Bible is the Word of God. And I told them, as I tell you, the central theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ.

Now, if you read the Bible and you don’t find Jesus Christ, go back and reread the Bible. He is the hero of the Bible. The Bible is His story. It is the story of Jesus Christ. Put this verse in your margin—Acts 10, verse 43: *“To him”—that is, to Jesus—“give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins.”* (Acts 10:43) And so Jesus said here in John 6, verse 45, *“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.”* (John 6:45) Jesus called upon the Scriptures to testify of Him.

And how do the Scriptures tell us of Jesus? What Jesus do these inspired words tell us about? Well, they tell us about the virgin-born Son of God. His life began with a miraculous birth. Then He lived a miraculous life. I told them, as I'm going to tell you, how Jesus Christ is absolutely unique as He's presented in the Bible.

Now it's one thing to believe that Jesus was here, but what kind of Jesus does the Bible describe? It describes a sinless man, a man who never modified or withdrew any statement that He ever made; a man who never apologized for anything He did, though He was often misunderstood; a man who never asked advice from anybody, even though He walked among the Pharisees and scribes and the doctors of the law; a man who never troubled to justify His actions when many people misunderstood what He did, like when He delayed to come to Lazarus' sickbed. He never tried to justify or say, "I'm sorry," or "I hope you'll understand." He never confessed sin one time, never asked forgiveness about anything. What an incredible life He lived! That's presented in the Bible. What strong points did Jesus have? None! Because He didn't have any weak points! Every part of His life was completely, totally, balanced, in perfect symmetry.

The Bible presents His miracle birth. The Bible presents His miracle life. The Bible tells about His sacrificial death. Let me tell you what was unique about the death of Jesus Christ. Not that He died. Other martyrs have died. He was the only One who chose to die. You say, "Well, other people choose to die." Oh, no. Even a suicide doesn't choose to die; he just chooses to die early. There's a new statistic out on death: One out of one people die. Everybody's going to die, except Jesus. There was no sin in Him. There was no reason for Him to die. Jesus said, "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of myself." (John 10:18) He was the only man who chose to die.

The Bible presents Him as the One who came out of that grave. He is the only One who has been raised from the dead. You say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor. Other people came back to life. What about Lazarus?" Lazarus was resuscitated to die again. Jesus was resurrected, and He lives in a glorified body and has become the firstfruits of all of those of us who sleep. And Jesus said He will raise us up at the last day. What I'm trying to say is, I believe in Jesus Christ because He is a historical fact. There is no way that you can explain the church of Jesus Christ apart from the history of Jesus who lived, died, and rose again. And I believe in Him because of the Bible. The Bible, a miracle book, that has stood the test of the ages, presents Jesus Christ as absolutely and totally unique.

III. I Believe in Jesus for Spiritual Reasons

Let me give you the third reason that I believe in Jesus Christ. And I believe in Jesus Christ for spiritual reasons. Look, if you will now, in verse 63 of this same chapter. Jesus, presenting Himself to those multitudes, said, *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the*

flesh profiteth nothing.” (John 6:63) You will never with your human mind comprehend who Jesus Christ is. It is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, that quickens, that helps you to understand, that gives life. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “He will testify of me.” (John 15:26)

Just put your bookmark there, and turn, if you will, to another book that John wrote. Turn to 1 John chapter 5, if you would. Let me show you how the Holy Spirit of God will convict you and convince you as to who Jesus Christ is, if you want to know. Look, if you will, in 1 John 5 and verse 6: *“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.”* He’s talking about the water and the blood that came out of Jesus’ side when He was crucified. Now, notice in verse 6: *“And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”* (1 John 5:6–8)

“Now, Pastor Rogers, do you expect me to believe in Jesus Christ just because you say that He was a historical fact? Even if I believe that, I’m not going to trust Him. Or do you believe that I’m going to believe in Jesus Christ just because your book says that He lived and you have evidence for the inspiration of the Bible? That’s not enough for me.” I will agree you need something else. You need the Holy Spirit of God to say *amen* to these other facts. You need the Holy Spirit to take you, and convict you, and convince you. I’ve told you before, anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of.

But now, notice in verse 9: *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.”* (1 John 5:9) God the Holy Spirit will testify in your hearts. I mean, we receive the witness of men. Somebody tells us something is true, and we believe it. I flew on an airplane yesterday; I had to trust the pilot. I ate in a restaurant; I had to trust the cook. You read a map; you trust the map maker. I mean, you’re trusting the engineer that built this building. That’s a pretty big span across there. It may come down in three seconds. I hope you’re ready to go. What am I saying? I’m saying we trust people every day.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.” And the word *if* there may be translated “since”: *“[Since] we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater”*—God the Holy Spirit. I told these, and I will tell you, if you want to know who Jesus Christ is, ask the Holy Spirit. God doesn’t just say that you must believe; and if you can’t believe, that’s your hard luck. God says, “If you want to believe, I will help you to understand and to know that these things are true.” And don’t you, anybody in this building, tell me you cannot believe. You may refuse to believe. But I will tell you this, that if you want to believe in Jesus Christ, if you seek truth, God the Holy Spirit will speak to you and confirm to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God

He witnesses to you, and then He witnesses in you. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”* (1 John 5:10) Verse 9 speaks of His witness to us. Verse 10 speaks of His witness on the inside. You see, why do I believe in Jesus Christ? Well, first of all, the Holy Spirit said to me, “He is the Son of God.” And once I’ve received Him into my heart, now I have the witness in myself.

And you can argue with me all day long and never convince me against Jesus Christ. You can bring sophisticated arguments to me, but I have the witness on the inside. And *a Christian with the witness in his heart is never at the mercy of a man with an argument in his mouth.* Learn that, my friend. The Bible says, *“Taste and see that the LORD is good.”* (Psalms 34:8)

And I gave my testimony to these in the Red Army Theater, and I’ll give my testimony to you. I have tasted, and I know. And if you were to tell me that apple pie is not good, or there is no apple pie, when I’ve just eaten a piece of apple pie, you can argue all you want, but I’ve got the evidence on the inside, amen? *“Taste and see that the LORD is good.” “He that believeth...hath the witness in himself.”*

IV. I Believe in Jesus for Personal Reasons

Why do we believe in Jesus Christ? The historical reasons: “I am that bread that came down from heaven.” (John 6:51) The scriptural reasons: “The prophets testify of me,” (John 5:39) He said. The spiritual reasons: *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” “The flesh profiteth nothing.” “It is the spirit that quickeneth.”* (John 6:63) Then I gave them the last of these reasons that I want to give you why I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in Him for personal reasons. Notice what Peter said here again. Go back to our text, if you will. Go back to John chapter 6 and look for just one more moment. Look, if you will, in verse 68: *“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (John 6:68–69)

What was Peter saying? Peter was saying, “I know it personally. I know it personally. I have proven it.” Not only does history tell me that He’s the Son of God, not only does the Bible tell me He’s the Son of God, not only does the Holy Spirit tell me that He’s the Son of God, but I know through personal experience, for personal reasons. I can testify. I’m sure!

✠ This last week I prayed with a young man to receive Christ. He was searching. I’ll never forget his question. He looked at me. He said, “Pastor, tell me, is He real to you?” I said, “Yes, He’s real. Yes, He’s real. He is real to me. I know! I am sure that He’s the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ✠

I want to tell you something else. The best people I know, know Him. The best

people I know love Him. I mean, I've met a lot of folks. I've met some charlatans. I've met some hypocrites. I've met some imposters. And Jesus, in this sixth chapter of John, talked about Judas, who was a false apostle. I'm going to tell you one thing, folks: You live a few years, travel around, meet God's wonderful, wonderful family, see how He changes lives, see what He means to you, be able to sing it, say it, and mean it, "Victory in Jesus," and He does give the victory.

Conclusion

I said to those men what I want to say to you: "This is why I believe in Jesus. And I want to ask you to believe in Him. Bow your heads and pray." And they did. Then I said, "If you prayed that prayer and asked Christ into your heart, would you lift up your hand?" And it looked to me like more than half of those soldiers there lifted up their hand, and they prayed to receive Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

And I wonder, O precious friend, today, do you know Him? He alone is the answer to your heart's need. There's nowhere else to go. Where else will you go if you don't go to Jesus? No one else has the answer to your sin. No one else can fill the longing of your heart. Nobody else can give you peace that passeth understanding. (Philippians 4:7) Nobody else has the words of eternal life. No one else walked out of that grave. But Jesus did. And I want you to know and be sure that He's the Son of God. †

@ A Christian with the witness in his heart is never at the mercy of a man with an argument in his mouth., 9
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Hypocrisy in the Ministry

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 2, 1988

Main Scripture Text: John 6:70–71

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Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles tonight, if you will, and turn to John chapter 6. And, look with me, please, in verse 70—John chapter 6 and verses 70 and 71: “*Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve*” (John 6:70–71). I want to talk to you about “Hypocrisy in the Ministry”—“Hypocrisy in the Ministry.” What Christian in this day and age has not hung his head in shame and disgrace because of the things that have happened in the lives of some very prominent television evangelists and ministers? It seems like some of them just simply won’t go away. We say, “Dear God—dear God—must the Body of Christ continue to be tortured?” What should be our relationship, and what should be our attitude toward these? Well, I’m not saying that these whose names you may be thinking of right now—I’m not going to mention any names, per se, and I’m not saying that they are a Judas—but I’m saying that we can learn much from Judas about these particular ones.

You see, there was a mother, one time, who held in her lap and bounced upon her knee a little baby boy. She loved him as much as any mother loves a little baby boy. She had the same hopes, desires, prayers, and ambitions for him that any mother

would have, I suppose. She named him Judas. Judas wasn't a bad name at that time; it was a very wonderful name, a very honorable name. I want to ask you a question today: Do you know of any boys named Judas? Did anybody go to your high school named Judas? Do you work with any man named Judas? Well, you might work with someone named Paul, or someone named David, or someone named Jonathan, or someone named Andrew, or someone named Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. You might name a dog Judas. I'd name a goat Judas. But, you wouldn't name a boy Judas. Why? Because Judas was the one who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ and betrayed Jesus with a kiss—that kiss of infamy, that kiss that burned like a hot coal upon the hand or face of Jesus, wherever it was that he planted that kiss, there in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas—there's no doubt about it—was a first-class hypocrite who betrayed the Lord. He sold the Lord Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. One source that I saw said that it was only about twenty dollars. Don't get the idea that it was a great, vast amount of cash that he got. Whatever it was, it was a token that he sold the Lord Jesus for. He betrayed the Son of man with a kiss.

Now, I want you to learn three or four lessons from the message tonight. It is going to be extremely simple, and I hope it will be helpful. When somebody who professes to be a Christian—or, let's say, someone who professes to be a pastor, preacher, or evangelist—falls and gets into gross sin, what lesson should we learn? Well, I want to mention tonight five or six lessons. It all depends on how fast you listen to what we can learn about Judas.

I. The Necessity of the New Birth

Number one: We can learn, my dear friend, the necessity of the new birth—the necessity of the new birth. I want to tell you that Judas never was saved. Don't get the idea that Judas was saved. He never was saved. Jesus said, *"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* (John 6:70). Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. The Bible makes it very clear, as we are going to show you later on, that Jesus wasn't taken by surprise. He didn't make a mistake. He chose Judas with His eyes wide open. He knew that Judas was an unsaved man when He chose him. Now, that brings up another problem, but we'll get into that in just a moment: Why would Jesus allow this? Why did Jesus allow a crook to be in the ministry? We'll get to that in a moment. Right now, I'm just going to tell you that Judas was not saved. He never was saved. Don't get the idea that Judas was saved and then lost his salvation. If you've got it, you can't lose it. Some people have an idea that you can get saved and then lose your salvation—not at all. If you're ever once saved, then you are saved for all eternity. He was a lost man.

But now, listen, folks: outwardly, you would not have known he was a lost man. Outwardly, Judas was a man of impeccable character. You think about it.

A. Judas Had Association

Let's give him the association test. Who did he associate with? He was one of the twelve. He went to seminary for three years where Jesus Christ was the president of the seminary. I mean, he was a seminarian under the Lord Jesus Christ. He had three years with the other eleven being taught face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. All right? He sat under the ministry of the Son of God. I would say that he passed the association test.

B. Judas Had Reputation

What about the reputation test? Well, he really passed the reputation test. You see, of all of the twelve, they chose one to be the treasurer. Now, who do you choose for the treasurer? Well, I would say you would choose the most impeccably honest and trustworthy member of the group to be the treasurer, and Judas was the treasurer. Men don't entrust their money to someone they think is a scoundrel.

You are in John chapter 6; turn to John chapter 13, and look with me in verse 25 here for a moment. In John chapter 13, Jesus had said that someone is going to betray Him. Let's go back to verses 18 and 19: Jesus said, *"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he"* (John 13:18–19). Jesus is basically saying, "Someone's going to betray me. I'm going to tell you ahead of time who it is going to be, because fulfilled prophecy is one of the marks of the Messiah." *"Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he"* (John 13:19). That is, "I am the Messiah."

Then, skip down to verse 22: *"Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake"*—now, it's very obvious that if Judas had a bad reputation, everybody would have said that "I know who it is: it's that rascal, that hypocrite, Judas." Now, verses 23 and following—*"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake"* (John 13:22–24). Now, you know, Simon Peter always wants to be on the inside. John was closest to Jesus, and Peter gives John an elbow and says, "Hey John, ask Him! Who is this who's going to betray Him?" *"Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly"* (John 13:26–

27). “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him.

Now, notice in verses 28 and 29: as soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:27). “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him (John 13:27). But, no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast or to give something to the poor (John 13:28–29). Do you see that? That means Judas was the treasurer. Some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast or to give something to the poor (John 13:29). I mean, there they are, around the table, and not one of them suspected Judas. That tells me, dear friend, that Judas was a good man by association: he was one of the twelve. He was a good man by reputation.

C. Judas Had Participation

And, he was a good man by participation. Did you know that Judas was with the disciples when they went out to preach, and teach, and heal? Judas preached. Judas taught. Judas served. And, people sat under the ministry of Brother Judas. Yet inwardly, he had the heart of a devil.

You’re in John; just turn backward to Matthew chapter 7 to look and see what the Lord Jesus said about that situation—Matthew chapter 7 and verses 22–24: *“Many will say to me in that day”—that is, the judgment 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). Ladies and gentlemen, learn this, and learn it well: when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit. Paul said that the *“ministers [of Satan are] transformed as...ministers of righteousness”* (2 Corinthians 11:15), for *“Satan himself is transformed [as] an angel of light”* (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Here was a man that by participation was known as a good man; by reputation, he was a good man; by association, he was a good man—but he never was saved. What a solemn warning that must be to church members sitting here tonight. I dare say, I have no way of knowing, but I dare say that a larger percentage of this congregation than we would dare dream in this building tonight is lost—more than most of us would like to think. I mean, if Jesus Christ were to come tonight, a great number of people in this auditorium tonight, I fear, would be left behind. You have your name on the roll of this church, but you have never been born again.

You say, “Pastor, are you trying to frighten me?” No, but I’m trying to get you to do what Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5: *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”*—*“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

You can sit here and sing “How I Love Jesus”; you can quote the verses; you can know the plan of salvation backward and forward—but I’ve told you before, *you are not saved by the plan of salvation; you are saved by the man of salvation*. His name is Jesus. There are people who know the plan who have never really ever received Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 15 and verses 7 and 8: “*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*” (Matthew 15:7–8). God, help us tonight to learn of the necessity of the new birth. Every time you see a hypocrite in the ministry or in any church life, it ought to cause you to ask, “Am I a hypocrite? Do I know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do I know Him personally? Am I saved? Do I know I’m saved? Does God’s Spirit bear witness with my spirit that I’m a child of God?”

II. The Reliability of the Holy Scripture

Now, there’s a second question, or a second lesson, that I want us to learn: not only the necessity of the new birth, but the reliability of the Holy Scripture. Listen again to the scriptures as I read them. Look, if you will, in John chapter 6 and verse 64. Look at this—John chapter 6 and verse 64: “*But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him*” (John 6:64). Jesus was not taken by surprise when Judas betrayed him.

Skip on down, if you will, to John chapter 6, verses 70 and 71 (where we started) again: “*Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (John 6:70). Then, turn with me again to John chapter 13, and look at this scripture. John chapter 13, again, deals with Judas. I’ve already read part of it, but I want to read it again. John chapter 13, verse 18—look at it: Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and He said, “*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen*”—“I know what I’m doing. Nothing has taken me by surprise”—“*but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me*”—now, watch verse 19—“*Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he*” (John 13:18–19). One of the greatest proofs of the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Christ is fulfilled prophecy.

Now, it was prophesied that Jesus would be betrayed. That prophecy you will find in Psalm 41 and verse 9: “*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me*” (Psalm 41:9). It was prophesied that Judas would sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Now, my dear friend, the Scripture is absolutely and totally reliable. Don’t get the idea that if some charlatan preacher on television goes against the Bible or lives an

ungodly life, that proves the Bible to be false. It doesn't prove the Bible to be false; it proves the Bible to be true, because the same Bible that prophesied the betrayal of Jesus is the same Bible that prophesied that, in the last days, men "*shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons]*" (1 Timothy 4:1). It is the same Bible that prophesied that all that we see in the religious scene today will take place. Jesus warned over and over again about false prophets.

Now, I want to tell you something, friend: if every preacher all agreed and there were no false prophets, it wouldn't prove the Bible true; it would prove the Bible false, because the Bible itself says these false prophets are going to come. Jesus essentially said, "Judas didn't take me by surprise. *'I know whom I have chosen'* (John 13:18). *'One of you is a devil'* (John 6:70), and it is done that you might believe (John 13:19)." Now friend, that ought to be an encouragement to you, because if somebody who is a world-famous preacher, an evangelist, or anybody else goes under or goes down, don't you lose your faith. The other eleven disciples did not quit because of Judas. Jesus had already prophesied. Jesus said, "It's going to come to pass. I am telling you before it comes to pass so that you won't lose your faith" (John 13:18–19). Don't you let a Judas keep you from getting the best out of life. Above all, don't you let a Judas keep you out of heaven.

Some people are going to hell because they sit up late one night and watch *Elmer Gantry* on the television set—something like that—and they say, "Oh, that whole bunch—they are all the same." They're not—they're not. Men who are around this world and love God; and preach the gospel; and are pure, and clean, and true, and have been that way for years and through the years... Don't you let some Judas keep you out of heaven. My friend, you can see the necessity of the new birth. You can also see in this story the reliability of the Scripture. You can just trust the reliability of God's Word, regardless of what some preacher may or may not do.

III. The Futility of the Social Gospel

There is a third thing I want you to learn, and it is this: it is the futility of the social gospel—the futility of the social gospel. Look again in John chapter 6 and 47 and following. You're going to find out what happened as a background to this passage of Scripture. In John 46, Jesus had just fed the five thousand. People were clamoring after Him because He fed them with physical, literal bread. Now, Jesus is trying to take these people who have their mind on material things and bring their mind to spiritual things. This is what He says: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life*"—now, these people were interested in physical life and material life, physical bread and material bread. Jesus says—"*I am that bread of life. Your fathers did*

eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die” (John 6:47–50). Skip on over, if you will, to verse 63 and 64, when Jesus says, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not” (John 6:63–64).

Now, do you get the idea? Judas was a materialist: *“There are some of you that believe not” (John 6:64).* Here Judas was following Jesus. Here Judas was having a wonderful time following Jesus when He was turning water into wine and when He was feeding the five thousand. Judas liked that program—that outward program—but it didn’t change his heart. Jesus is saying, “It’s not this bread that I’m talking about; it is the bread that cometh down from heaven” (John 6:58).

We have people today who don’t believe in the old-fashioned gospel of the blood atonement. They want our churches to become sinners for social action. I believe, my dear friend, that we ought to feed the hungry—Jesus fed the hungry. I believe that we ought to cloth the poor—Jesus clothed the poor. This church feeds the hungry; this church clothes the poor. But, I want to tell you, that is not the gospel. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He rose again on the third day. God forbid that this church should do anything else as a major responsibility than to preach the gospel.

We have a generation of people today that want to tell us that man is not sinfully sick: “he’s not evil; he’s ill—he’s not wicked, and he’s weak. What we need to do is just change the environment.” I want to tell you that man fell in a perfect environment. In the Garden of Eden, that’s where man got into trouble. Nobody had a better association or a better environment than Judas. Judas was there when Jesus was feeding the multitudes. Judas was there in association with the Son of God. Judas had good surroundings, and yet it did not change him at all. Sin started in the Garden of Eden, so what a warning this ought to be to us that the social gospel is not the Bible gospel! The saving gospel is the Bible Gospel. I’m not against helping people; Jesus is not against that. I’m saying that’s no substitute for preaching the true gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

IV. The Duplicity of Sin

I want you to see not only the futility of the social gospel, but also a fourth lesson I want you to see: that is, the duplicity of sin—the duplicity of sin.

A. Judas’ Sin Deceived Him

Judas was deceived by the devil. Judas was deceived by sin. Judas’ sin deceived him. Remember I told you this morning that the devil gets the best first and the worst last?

That is certainly illustrated in the life of Judas. Judas now is conscience-stricken. What he did when he betrayed Jesus hung over him like a veil of death. His mind and his heart are aflame with the fires of hell, and his conscience burns to torture him. He comes and he tries to return the thirty pieces of silver. But now, his mind is so twisted, he's so depraved, and he is so full of the devil that he doesn't seem to have the ability to repent. He's only filled with remorse and pain. Sin offers much, but it gives little. As I said this morning, the cup of sin is sweet, but the dregs of sin are bitter.

B. Judas' Sin Destroyed Him

And, the sin that deceived him is the sin that destroyed him. The Bible tells us in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 5 how he died. He died a suicide. The Bible says he "*went [out] and hanged himself*" (Matthew 27:5). Some people have supposed there's a contradiction in the Bible because there's another episode that says that he fell and his bowels gushed out. In Acts 1 and verse 18, the Bible says, "*Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out*" (Acts 1:18). Well, I want to ask a question: What happened? How did he die? Did he die by falling, or did he fall and burst asunder, or did he hang himself? Well, both are true. The Bible says both happened—both happened. There is no contradiction.

I believe this is what probably happened: I believe that Judas now knows that he is in a no-win situation. He doesn't, again, have the grace to repent. He is filled with remorse, and in anguish of mind and horror of soul, he has the idea that he is going to commit suicide. He finds a limb that is growing out over some cliff—some scraggly limb—and he fastens a rope to that limb and then makes a hangman's noose. He puts it around his neck, and then he steps over the precipice and hangs himself. There the body swings and blows in the wind. His face is, after a while, blue. His swollen tongue is covered with flies. And, after a while, the vultures and the birds come and pick the eyes from their sockets. Then, the skin begins to crack, as the body continues to swell and bloat. The stench is unbearable, and after a while, somebody comes along and sees that disgusting sight and puts their hand up in order to stop the stench. They hold some cloth over their nose and turn their eyes backward to keep from looking on the side that takes the sword and just simply cuts it down. Then, that body falls and hits the rocks and bursts open like an overripe melon. All of his entrails go out upon the ground.

You say, "Pastor, that's not pretty." I didn't mean for it to be. I want to tell you, dear friend, that sin ends that way. The devil never shows the finished product of the devil's art. The devil doesn't want you to see this. I see Judas as Judas is already in hell, because, my dear friend, when he committed suicide, he stepped from the hell within

him to the hell before him. And, Judas was in hell, dear friend—before anybody knew he was dead, he was already in hell. Judas, I want to ask you a question: Judas, where are you thirty pieces of silver now? Judas, where are your friends now? Where's your silver now? His sin deceived him. His sin destroyed him.

C. Judas' Sin Damned Him

And, I want to tell you what else his sin did: his sin dammed him. Do you know what Jesus said of Judas? One of the most frightening verses I've ever read in any of all literature—in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 24, Jesus said, *"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born"* (Matthew 26:24)—"better he had never been born."

Friend, if you are a hypocrite, you don't get born twice. The day will come when you will curse the day that you were born at all, because if you are not born twice, you're going to die twice: you're going to die the physical death; you're going to die the eternal death. And, it is better that you had never been born. Acts chapter 1, verse 25 says, *"Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place"* (Acts 1:25).

V. The Security of the Believer

Now, there is a final thing that I want you to learn about this hypocrite in this ministry: I want you to learn not only, dear friend, of the duplicity of sin, but I want you to learn of the security of the believer—the security of the believer. Go back again and look at our text in John chapter 6, and I want to read now verses 68 and following: *"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"*—now, Simon Peter was different from Judas. Judas was interested in this world, but Simon Peter was interested in eternal life—*"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"* (John 6:68–69).

Well, my dear friend, if you had been there that day and had looked at Simon Peter, the big fisherman, and you looked at Judas, and somebody said, "Tell us which one of these is saved," you would have said, "Well, I believe Judas is saved, and I believe Peter is lost." Peter is always making mistakes. He even cursed, swore, and denied the Lord Jesus. You remember that. Peter always said silly things and stupid things. About the only time he ever opened his mouth is to change feet. That's just the way he was.

But, look with me in Luke chapter 22. I want to show you something here very wonderful—very wonderful. Here's the difference between a true child of God and an unsaved man—Luke 22, 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"* (Luke

22:31–32). You see, Simon Peter had faith. Judas never had faith. Jesus said, “*Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you... But I have prayed for thee*” (Luke 22:31–32).

There are these people that have the idea that somehow Satan can take you away from God. Well, don't you know if he could, he would? He can't, and the reason he can't is that Jesus prays for us. You say “Well, it just says here that Jesus prayed for Simon. Where does it say He prayed for me?” In John chapter 17, verse 15, when Jesus prayed for His disciples, saying, “*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*” (John 17:15). And then, Jesus said, “*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*” (John 17:20). Jesus prayed for me. Jesus prayed for you, and Jesus now “*ever [lives] to make intercession for [us]*” (Hebrews 7:25)—because He prays.

The devil would like to get Adrian Rogers. The devil would like to get Ashley Clayton. The devil would like to get Mike Carrier. The devil would like to get Jean Howard. The devil would like to get you. But, I have a Savior—a dear, loving Savior—who is praying and interceding for me. He desires to have me, that He might sift me as wheat (Luke 22:31). “*But I have prayed for [you]*” (Luke 22:32). Here Jesus prayed for Simon Peter. Yes, Peter fell; yes, Peter stumbled; yes, Peter denied the Lord—but Jesus held him. **The love of God is like a strong rubber band: He puts it around you; you may stray off, but He brings you back—He brings you back; He brings you back.**

But, if you go on down to Luke 22, verse 47: “While He was still speaking, a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss Him” (Luke 22:47). You see the difference? There's Simon Peter—Simon Peter and Judas. If you had looked at them, you would have said, “Well, it's Peter who's going to betray the Lord. It's Peter who's going to lose out. It's Peter who's going to be that arch villain. It's Peter who is the devil.” But, it wasn't.

There are some people here tonight—they don't look nearly as good as other people. If you and I were to go through this congregation and try to separate the wheat from the tares, we'd make a mess. We'd say the Judases are saved and the Simon Peters are lost. But, thank God the Lord knows those that are His. The Lord knows those who have faith. The Lord knows those who have received Him as personal Savior and Lord. I'll tell you, those He knows are the ones He keeps. He says, “*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 10:27–28). Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Conclusion

Now, you listen to me, folks. I just want to sum it up. Make certain your saved. Judas was in the ministry, but he wasn't saved—he wasn't saved. If you see a hypocrite, don't let that throw you—don't let that throw you. It hasn't taken Jesus by surprise. Jesus said, *"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* (John 6:70). Don't quit serving God because of the hypocrites. I am going to say also, don't fall into the trap that Judas fell into and get wrapped up in this social gospel and fail to understand, dear friend, that the words that Jesus gives *"are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). Don't miss the life, the spirit, of the whole thing. I want to say something else, dear friend: thank God if you've trusted Him every time you see a hypocrite fall.

The Man Who Kissed the Door to Heaven and Then Went to Hell

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 7, 1988

Main Scripture Text: John 6:70–71

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God's Word, and I want you to turn with me, please, this morning, to John chapter 6, and we're going to look in verses 70 and 71. I suppose almost as beautiful as the music we've heard from the choirs and the soloists is the turning of those pages as you're finding God's Word. You'll always get so much more from any message if you keep your Bible open there in your hand. John chapter 6, verse 70: *"Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve"* (John 6:70–71).

Many years ago, a woman gave birth to a bouncing baby boy. And, if she was a normal mother—and I believe she was—she cuddled that child in her arms, she nestled that baby boy next to her cheek, she spoke baby talk to him, she caressed him and cared for him, nursed him and loved him. He was precious to her. She selected a name for him: she called him Judas. That was the name of that little baby. But, you know, today, mothers don't name their little boys Judas; they name them Peter, and James, and Paul, and Matthew, and Timothy, and Zechariah, and Amos. But, I've never heard of a little boy named Judas. I've heard of a dog named Judas and a goat named Judas,

but never a little boy named Judas. Why? It was Judas who betrayed the Lord Jesus.

And, you remember that night. Dark was that night. Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was praying before His crucifixion. It was that great moment of ultimate surrender to the cross and the humiliation of the cross. He was in such agony. The Bible tells us that the minute capillaries in his skin ruptured, and his sweat became drops of blood (Luke 22:44). He's in agony. It's quiet in the garden. The city is asleep, and the disciples are sleeping. There's little noise except perhaps the whisper of the wind in the olive trees, the chirping of the crickets. But, suddenly we're aware of another sound: there are footsteps, muffled voices. Then, we see torches that are glaring, and those torches reveal the expression on the faces of the crafty priest and Pharisees, whose hearts burn with hate toward the Lord Jesus.

Soldiers are there, and we hear the clanking of the armor as they surround the Lord Jesus. Judas is leading them. Judas has sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Judas has betrayed Jesus. They want to take Jesus, arrest Him, condemn Him, crucify Him, be rid of Him, but they're not quite certain which one is Jesus. Judas said, "*Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast*" (Matthew 26:48). Judas steps from that crowd; he approaches Jesus. He's a first-class hypocrite, for he bows and he says, "*Hail, master*" (Matthew 26:49). And then, he kisses Jesus. I don't know where he kissed Jesus—perhaps on the cheek; perhaps he kissed Him on the hand, as a disciple would, many times, his master; perhaps in false humiliation he kissed the feet of Jesus. We don't know, but he kissed Jesus. That kiss was the kiss of shame; it was the kiss of infamy. It was a kiss that burned like a hot coal from hell. It was the kiss of betrayal, and it was the kiss of death. Judas kissed Jesus.

Jesus was the door to heaven. Jesus said, "*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved*" (John 10:9). And, Judas kissed the door to heaven; and then, he went to hell. There are so many lessons that can be learned from this betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ by Judas. There are so many lessons that can be learned from the life of Judas. And, I've looked here—primarily in this sixth chapter of John. Many of those lessons just seem to come right out of this particular chapter that we're looking at, and I want you to look at it with me.

I. A Lesson About Salvation

The very first thing I want you to learn is a lesson concerning salvation and what I want to call "the tragedy of a lost church member." Now, Judas was one of the twelve apostles. He was a church member; and yet, he died and went to hell. Jesus said, "*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*" (John 6:70). And, as we're going to see later on, Judas never was saved; he never was born again. Some people

have the idea that Judas was saved and he lost his salvation. Oh, no—he never was saved. But, he was a church member, and outwardly he looked so fine. I mean, outwardly, folks, he had it all.

A. He Had the Right Association

He had association. I mean, he kept company with the twelve. He was one of the apostles. You couldn't have better associations than that. He had association.

B. He Had the Right Education

Not only did he have association; he had education. I mean, he was educated by the Lord Jesus Christ. You talk about a seminary education! He'd had three years with the Son of God. He'd seen Jesus heal the sick and raise the dead. He heard the Sermon on the Mount. He listened to the parables in Matthew 13. He'd heard it all, and he had education.

C. He Had the Right Reputation

Not only did he have the right association and the right education, but he had the right reputation. Do you know that Judas was the treasurer of the twelve? Now, you think about that, my friend. When you're looking for someone in the organization to handle the money, who do you get? The best. You get somebody who's got the right reputation—don't you?—somebody that you think you can trust. You say, "We're going to hand the money over to you." And, the Bible says it was Judas that "*had the bag*" (John 12:6). He had reputation. As a matter of fact, when Jesus Christ said, "One of you is going to betray me" (Matthew 26:21; Mark 14:18; John 13:21), not a' one of them said, "Well, I bet it's old Judas." They said, "Is it I?" No one suspected Judas. That tells me that he had an impeccable reputation.

D. He Had the Right Participation

Now, look—association, education, reputation, then participation. He worked; he served, and he went out with the others when they were sent out to preach or teach. Doubtless, he preached sermons. People called him "Brother Judas." He ministered; he worked, but he was never saved. Jesus warned in Matthew chapter 7, verse 22: "*Many will say to 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*" (Matthew 7:22–23).

Suppose we were to have an interview with Mister Judas today, and I say to him, "Judas, are you saved?" He says, "I'm a church member." "But Judas, I didn't ask you that. I said, 'Judas, are you saved?'" "I'm a member of an orthodox church. I'm a member of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem." "Judas, I didn't ask you that. Judas,

have you ever been born again?" "I'm a charter member." "Judas, that's not what I'm asking you. Judas, do you know Christ as your personal Savior?" "I, sir, am the treasurer in that church."

My friend, listen to me. It breaks my heart to say it, and I feel like weeping when I say it—but I sincerely believe that there are some who are sitting in this auditorium, this morning, who are members of this church, who are going to die and go to hell. I believe that. That's a sobering thought. But, there are many people today who, like Judas—you have the right association, you have the right reputation, you have the right education, you have the right participation, but you don't have regeneration. You have never been born again. And, there are thousands—and perhaps millions—who are going to die and go to hell surrounded by baptismal certificates, receipts for church offerings, Sunday School attendance pins, and all the rest of it, but they've never been saved.

You say, "Well, now Pastor, are you trying to make me doubt my salvation?" No, I'm trying to make you examine yourself. The Bible says to *"examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith"* (2 Corinthians 13:5). Do you know that you're saved? Don't you rest in your relationship with Bellevue Baptist Church. This church or any other church cannot save you. Do you know Christ as your personal Savior?

II. A Lesson About the Fulfillment of Scripture

Now, there's a great lesson, therefore, concerning salvation in this passage of Scripture, but there's also a great lesson concerning the Scriptures in this passage of Scripture and a tremendous blessing in this particular passage of Scripture, because, you see, there's a problem that comes to our minds. Jesus said in John chapter 6, verses 70 and 71: *"Have [I] not...chosen you twelve, and one of you is [the] devil?"* (John 6:70). Now, Jesus chose a devil to be an apostle. That brings up a problem: Why would Jesus choose a devil to be an apostle? "Well," you say, "He made a mistake." He never makes mistakes. "Well," you say, "Judas was right to begin with, and then he turned out wrong." No, he was wrong from the beginning.

Let me show you something here. It's very interesting. Look with me here in John chapter 6, and let me show you a scripture hunt in verse 64—look at it: *"But there are some of you that believe not"*—that's what Jesus said when He talked to those who were following Him—*"But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not"*—you see, it didn't take Him by surprise—*"Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him"* (John 6:64). I mean, Jesus chose Judas with His eyes wide open, knowing that Judas would betray Him. He knew that Judas never believed. Now, that's interesting. Why would Jesus want a crook in the ministry? Why would Jesus choose a

hypocrite to be one of the twelve apostles? What's all of this about?

You're going to learn a wonderful lesson about the Scriptures. I want you to leave John chapter 6 and go to John chapter 13, and let me show you something here that will really bless your heart. I hope it will; it really blessed mine. John chapter 13—and let's begin reading in verse 18: Jesus is speaking of His disciples, and He says, *"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen"*—that is, "I did everything with my eyes wide open"—*"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he"* (John 13:18–19). Jesus explains in this passage, in John 13, why He chose Judas. He said, *"I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled"* (John 13:18). You see, there was a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus in Psalm chapter 41 and verse 9: *"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me"* (Psalm 41:9). It was a prophecy of the betrayal of the Messiah, that the Messiah who would come—the Christ that would come—would be betrayed by a familiar friend. Jesus said, "The reason that Judas was chosen was that this scripture might be fulfilled" (John 13:18).

You see, folks, the Bible is an amazing and a wonderful book. Only God knows the future; only God can prophesy. The devil doesn't know the future, Jeane Dixon doesn't know the future. You don't know the future. I don't know the future. Only God knows the future. The only part of the future that we know is what God has revealed to us through the Bible—that's all. Only God knows the future. One of the great authenticating factors of the Bible is fulfilled prophecy. I've studied the Bible long enough now to know that it is absolutely, totally impossible that this book could have been written other than by divine inspiration because of fulfilled prophecy.

And, Jesus said, "I am going to be betrayed—I'm going to be betrayed—as a fulfillment of scripture" (John 13:18). And then, He said, "And, it's very important, when this happens, that you might believe that I am He" (John 13:19). Who is He talking about? "When you see all of these scriptures being fulfilled in me, then you're going to know that I am the Messiah." There are over three hundred and thirty-three precise prophecies that converge in the Lord Jesus Christ, that are literally fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ—the Old Testament scriptures that were fulfilled in the New Testament by the Lord Jesus Christ. And, most of these were not fulfilled by His friends; they were fulfilled by His enemies, those who would have the most to lose by the fulfillment of these prophecies. They were the ones who fulfilled those prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The very place they said He would be born, the manner of His life, the manner of His

death, what His enemies would do—all of this was minutely prophesied. My friend, listen to me, and listen well: the possibility—the probability—that these prophecies were fulfilled by chance is astronomically negative. It is literally impossible to believe that all of these scriptures could be so minutely fulfilled and Jesus not be the Messiah. Thank God for the Bible. Judas was chosen, that it would be a fulfillment of scripture. Nothing got out of hand, and everything is exactly as the Bible has prophesied.

III. A Lesson About Service

Now, there's a third lesson I want you to learn: not only a lesson about salvation and the danger of being an unsaved church member, and not only a wonderful comforting lesson as well as a warning lesson about the fulfillment of scripture, but there's also a lesson I want us to learn about service in the story here of Judas. Now, notice in verses 67 and 68: *"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?"*—this is John chapter 6, verse 68—*"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* (John 6:67–70). Now, Jesus turned to Simon Peter. He said, "Simon, are you going to leave me?" Other people were leaving. Simon says, "I'm not going to leave you, Lord. Where else would I go? I mean, there's no other place, Lord. I'm committed to you for life." Now, I want you to learn a lesson about service. Judas was a hypocrite. Judas failed and betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ, but the other eleven continued to serve Jesus Christ. They did not quit; they continued to serve.

Some of you may stop serving the Lord Jesus and some of you may never begin serving the Lord Jesus because of some old Judas. Listen, folks, there have always been hypocrites in the Church; there always will be hypocrites in the Church. In the parables in Matthew chapter 13—you go and read them—Jesus talks about the bad soil and the good soil, and the wheat and the tares, and the bad fish in the net, and all of this (Matthew 13:3–53). Read it. Hypocrites have not taken our Lord by surprise. They ought not to take you by surprise, and they ought not to keep you from serving the Lord Jesus. And, I tell you, there may be a few bad eggs on board; there may be some hypocrites on board—but the old ship of Zion plows onward, and I'm glad I'm aboard.

And, any man who will let a hypocrite keep him from serving the Lord Jesus Christ is a hypocrite himself. I'll tell you why: because he's not consistent. He says, "Well, I don't want to be a member of the church and I don't want to be a Christian because of the hypocrites." You're not consistent, mister. **Some doctors are quacks, but when you get sick, you call on a doctor. Sure you do. Some lawyers may be shysters, but when you need legal advice, you go to a lawyer. Some money is counterfeit, but you haven't**

burned the rest of yours, have you? Of course you haven't. You see, as a matter of fact, dear friend, it is the counterfeit that validates the real. You see, men only counterfeit that which is valuable. Men don't counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills. Why? Because a twenty-dollar bill is worth something—about five dollars. And so, they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills because the counterfeit proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real. You see, any man who hides behind a hypocrite is smaller than the hypocrite or he couldn't hide behind him. Any man who lets a hypocrite keep him from Jesus Christ is a hypocrite himself. Sure, Judas was a hypocrite, but Peter says, "Where else are we going to go, Jesus? You alone have the words of life" (John 6:67–68). I had rather spend a few years with some of the hypocrites in the Church than spend eternity with all of them in hell. Don't you let some Judas keep you from Jesus Christ.

You know, I believe some people are going to die and go to hell because they watched *Elmer Gantry* on the late movie, one night. How many of you know who I'm talking about? Let me see your hand. Yeah, you know the movie *Elmer Gantry*. There was a guy who was supposed to be a preacher of the gospel. He was a money-grabber, a manipulator, and so forth—a philanderer. They say, "Well, that's the way all these people are." No, they're not. I want to tell you something, friend—God knows I mean this: I've been preaching long enough to know there may be some hypocrites in the Church, but the best people on the face of God's green earth are in the churches of Jesus Christ. I mean, the loveliest, finest, kindest, gentlest, self-sacrificing, loving, and giving people you're going to find in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't you let some Judas keep you from being a part of that crowd. Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"—"where else is there?"—"[You alone have] the words of...life" (John 6:68).

IV. A Lesson About the Social Gospel

There's a wonderful lesson about service. There's also, in this chapter, a lesson about the social gospel, which is no gospel at all, as we're going to see.

You see, in this same chapter, Jesus had just fed the five thousand, and Judas was there when Jesus fed the five thousand. As a matter of fact, I have little doubt in my mind that Jesus fed Judas when he fed those others and Judas ate of that bread. I want you to look here in this chapter. After Jesus fed the five thousand—look in chapter 6, verse 26: "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled"—that is, "The only reason you're following me is because you ate some of the bread." And then, He says in verse 27—"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto

you: for him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:26–27). Now, what Jesus is saying is, “Don’t spend all of your time just trying to get some more bread in your stomach. There’s something else more important. You work for—you labor for—that meat which endures into everlasting life.” And then, look over, if you will, in John chapter 6, verse 47: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:47–51). Look in verse 57: “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever” (John 6:57–58).

You say, “Pastor, why did you read all those scriptures about the bread?” Because Christ is making a contrast. Jesus has fed them with physical, literal, material bread, but Jesus is saying, “You need something more than this bread. You need eternal life.” Judas ate that bread, and he’s in hell right now. “Now, what is the point, Pastor?” The point is that we have those today who would try to divert the Church from their main task and their main jog. Do you know what my task is at Bellevue Baptist Church? It’s to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. There are those today who want to turn the Church into a vast social agency.

A newspaper reporter interviewed me about Korea. He asked me about this very thing. He said, “I want to ask you why the churches are not more interested in the social gospel.” And, I told him, as I want to tell you: friend, there is no social gospel. There is but one gospel; it is the saving gospel of Jesus Christ—that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He was raised again on the third day. I am for feeding the poor—I believe we ought to. I give my own money to feed the poor. I try to give generously to do that. I am for housing people. I am for clothing the naked. I am for educating people, and I am for that with all of my heart and with all of my soul. Jesus did it, and so must we. But, Jesus tried to put it in perspective. Jesus said, “Now, wait a minute. You’re following me just because you eat of this bread.” He said, “Your fathers ate the manna that came from heaven, and they’re dead.” He said, “You’d better eat of me. Don’t labor for that bread that perishes but for that bread that lasts ’til eternal life.”

Oh, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we ought to care about the people in Ethiopia. We ought to get food to them. But, if we don’t get the gospel to them, all we’re doing is populating hell. They’re going to live longer, procreate more and more people who are going to die and go to hell without the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, if you go out of here and say I said not to feed the poor, you’re lying. I didn’t say that. I am

saying, my dear friend, that we had better not get diverted and stop preaching the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Judas ate that bread, and he's in hell right now.

Why? Listen, if we had four billion dollars right now—four billion dollars to feed the poor—how many Big Macs could you buy with four million dollars? Could you buy four billion Big Macs? Could you? Could you get a Big Mac for a dollar with a coupon? All right, let's just suppose you go to Wendy's or Krystal—let's give them all a little plug here—and you could get a hamburger for a dollar, and you've got four billion dollars. There are more than four billion people on the face of this earth. If you get every one of them a hamburger, five hours from now they'd all be hungry again, and they're all going to die regardless.

Now, what Jesus is saying is, "Don't spend all of your time just trying to get some more bread in your stomach. There's something else more important. You work for—you labor for—that meat which endures into everlasting life" (John 6:27). My dear friend, our job is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the only hope of this world is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "There is eternal life. There's everlasting life" (John 6:27). Judas ate of that bread, and now he's dead because he never fed on the bread of life. He never knew the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have people today who just tell us to change the environment and you're going to change the man. That's wrong, dear friend. It is man that ruins the environment. Let me tell you, you think that the environmentalist has the answer? Do you know where man got in trouble? In the Garden of Eden. You're not going to have a better environment than that. I mean, that's where man fell—in the Garden of Eden. I am telling you, dear friend, that *man needs more than soap and soup; he needs salvation*. He needs Jesus Christ. He needs to be born again. And, this lesson of Judas here in this sixth chapter tells us of the failure of the social gospel, of not getting people saved and born again. What a warning it is to us that man needs something more than that which perishes. There's a wonderful lesson there.

V. A Lesson About Sin

Also, there's a lesson concerning sin here. I don't know what caused Judas to betray the Lord Jesus. Some have theorized that Judas was trying to force the hand of Jesus. He thought Jesus was sort of like a wimp, that Jesus was just not manly enough—He wasn't taking charge. These people are trying to make Judas look a little better, and they're trying to say that Judas was just trying to participate in a crisis so that Jesus would assert Himself and take over the kingdom. I don't think I believe that. It doesn't make any difference whether I believe it or not. The Bible doesn't say it. We don't know whether he did it or not. Some people say, "He just betrayed Jesus because he was a

thief.” The Bible does say, *“He was a thief”* (John 12:6), and he was just greedy for thirty pieces of silver. Other people say, “He did it because he was demon-possessed.” Why ever he did it, however he did it, that doesn’t matter. He did it, and then he said, later on, *“I have betrayed the innocent blood”* (Matthew 27:4). You see, sin deceived him. Then, later on, the Bible teaches that he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). Sin destroyed him. Then, later on, he died and went to his own place; he went to hell. Jesus said, “It would have been better for him if he’d never been born” (Mark 14:21). Sin deceived him; sin destroyed him, and sin damned him.

You’re going to learn a lesson about sin today. I want every young person listening to me now—listening to me by radio, listening to me by television, or listening to me by tape later on—to learn this. A country preacher told me this a long time ago. He said, “Adrian, never forget this: sin will take you further than you want to go; two, sin will keep you longer than you want to stay; three, sin will cost you more than you want to pay.”

Now, what happened to Judas? The Bible says in Matthew 27 that he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). But, the Bible says in the early part of the book of Acts that he *“[fell down] headlong [and broke] asunder...and...his bowels gushed out”* (Acts 1:18). Well, which is true? Did he hang himself, or did he fall and split asunder? Both. What happened is this, I’m quite confident: Judas did hang himself. The deed that he’s done hangs like a pall of gloom over him. He throws the money back to the priest. He says, *“I...betrayed...innocent blood”* (Matthew 27:4). With trembling fingers, he fastens the hangman’s noose. He puts it around his neck, puts it over a limb, and swings out over a cliff or some precipice, and dangles there. His neck is pulled up sideways. His circulation is cut off. He cannot breathe. His face turns red, white, and then blue from lack of oxygen. He begins to gasp and to gurgle. He quivers. He expires, and he steps from the hell within him to the hell beyond him. And, his body still dangles there from that limb. He hanged himself. But then, the Bible says, *“He burst asunder”* (Acts 1:18), and the idea there, in the language, is like an overripe melon that’s dropped on the ground. As that body dangles from that limb, if it stayed there very long, it would begin to swell, and the skin would become checkered as it stretched and split. And, the tongue would protrude, and the flies would gather on the tongue. The birds would come and pick out the eyes. And, the body would continue to bloat, and the stench would be unbearable. And finally, someone would come along and see that disgusting sight, and shielding their nose from the stench, with a knife would come and cut that body down. And, it would fall to the jagged rocks. Then, it would burst, and the entrails would spill out on the ground.

You say, “My goodness, Preacher. It’s almost lunch. You’re talking that way?” Well, look, folks: I just want to show you that sin is not a pretty thing. You know, the devil likes

to glamorize it, doesn't he? But, you see, it didn't end there. If that's all, that wouldn't be so bad, but Jesus said of Judas that it had been "*good...for that man [that] he had never been born*" (Mark 14:21). You see, if Judas could just commit suicide and it'd be all over, that'd be something. But, Jesus said, "It had been good for him that he'd never been born" (Mark 14:21). You see, listen, if you're born twice, you die once. If you're born once, you'll die twice. And, if you die twice, you'll wish you've never been born at all. Judas died, and he went to hell. What a solemn warning of the power of sin!

Conclusion

Friend, do you know Jesus? "Well," you say, "I don't know Jesus, but I'm no Judas." Yes, but Jesus said, "*He that is not with me is against me*" (Matthew 12:30). And, you see, look, if you're not saved, you're in the same crowd with Judas, and you'll spend eternity with Judas in hell. "But," you say, "I've never sinned like Judas." No, you haven't, but, you see, it's not type of sin; it is the fact of sin.

Have you been reading recently about the Titanic? They haven't brought it up, but they discovered it—thirty thousand feet (two-and-a-half miles) down on the ocean floor. It was called "the unsinkable," and it did the unthinkable—and it sunk. Unsinkable, but that's about the only thing it ever did—sink. And now, they've found it down there. You say, "Well, yes, my goodness, everybody ought to drown in two-and-a-half miles of water." Listen, friend: more people have drowned in thirteen feet of water than have drowned in thirteen thousand feet of water. More drown near the shore than in the middle of the ocean. Do you realize that? It is not the type of sin; it is the fact of sin that condemns us.

And, if you don't know Jesus today, you can know Him as your personal Savior and Lord by receiving Him. I want every head bowed.

Why Did Jesus Choose Judas?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 3, 1981

Main Scripture Text: John 6:70–71

Outline

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- I. Jesus Chose Judas to Fulfill Bible Prophecy
- II. Jesus Chose Judas to Be an Encouragement to Us
- III. Jesus Chose Judas to Show the Inadequacy of the Social Gospel
- IV. Jesus Chose Judas to Warn Church Members Who Have Never Been Saved
- V. Jesus Chose Judas to Warn Us About the Deceiving Power of Sin

Conclusion

Introduction

John chapter 6 and verse 70: “Jesus answered them, *Have [I] not...chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*”—and then, the next verse says—“*He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for...it was [he]*”—“*for he it was*”—“*that should betray him, being one of the twelve*” (John 6:70–71). “*Have [I] not...chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (John 6:70). Now, my sermon subject tonight is this: “Why did Jesus choose Judas?”

Let your mind go back almost two thousand years to the Garden of Gethsemane. I’ve been there on many occasions, where those old olive trees are. And, in my reverie, I can see Jesus now, as He is in agony and prayer. Jesus is praying, “*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not [my] will, but [thine be done]*” (Matthew 26:39). It’s very quiet in the Garden of Gethsemane. I suppose the only noises that can be felt there and heard there—the chirping of the crickets and perhaps the gentle breezes as they make their way through the old olive trees. Even the disciples Peter, James, and John are asleep. Their eyes are heavy with sleep. And, Jesus is praying in agony, and His eyes will not close in sleep until they close in death. And suddenly, there’s a noise; there’s a clamor. There’s the clanking of armor. There’s the flashing of torches. And, Jesus is confronted with an army of people. The soldiers are there with sticks, and staves, and swords. The high priests are there; the scribes are there, and Judas is there. And, Judas comes up to the Lord Jesus, and he says, “Greetings, Master.” And then, he plants a kiss upon that altogether lovely brow. It was a kiss that burned like a coal from hell. It was the kiss of betrayal. It was the kiss of

death. Jesus looked at him and said, “[*Friend,*] *betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*” (Luke 22:48). Who is this one who kissed the door to heaven and went to hell? For Jesus was the door to heaven, and Judas did go to hell. Who was this one that kissed the door to heaven and went to hell?

One time, long ago, a mother held in her arms a bouncing baby boy, and she called him Judas. She loved him. She kissed him. She dandled him from her hands upon her knees. She played with his little fingers. She pinched his chubby cheeks. She smothered him with her kisses—just a little, chubby, beautiful baby boy. And, she said, “I’ll call him Judas”—one of the most honorable names in all Israel—“Judas, Judas.” But today, mothers don’t name their children Judas. They name their children Peter, James, Paul, David, Matthew. But, what mother would ever name her child Judas? We might name a goat Judas. We might name a dog Judas. But, who would ever name a child Judas? It was Judas that betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. Outwardly, he was a good man. I mean, he could have been a deacon in Bellevue Baptist Church. He could have been a pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention. He had all the credentials. He went to the right seminary. He was three years under the tutelage of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You talk about running in the right crowd! He was one of the twelve, impeccable with his credentials. He had such a good reputation that when the twelve got ready to choose a treasurer, guess who they chose? They chose Judas.

Now, let me ask you a question: Of all of the people, when you’re looking for a treasurer, who do you look for that has...I mean, what do you look for except the man that has the best reputation and the most character? You say, “Well, if he’s going to be the treasurer, he’s got to be a man that can be trusted.” As a matter of fact, when Jesus said in John chapter 13, “*One of you [is going to] betray me*” (John 13:21), when Jesus was there at the Last Supper, the disciples (all of them) said, “Lord, who is it? Could it be me?” (John 13:25). Not a’ one of them pointed a finger and said, “It’s going to be that old Judas”—not a’ one of them. They didn’t think that Judas was the one who was going to betray Jesus. I’m saying, outwardly, Judas had an impeccable reputation, and people looked up to Judas. Why, he was a religious worker! When the seventy were sent out, Judas was sent out with them. Judas preached sermons. Judas gave invitations. Judas taught lessons. Judas served Jesus outwardly, but he was a first-class hypocrite. Jesus said, “*Have [I] not...chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (John 6:70). Judas was a devil, a demon; Judas was a hypocrite, and Judas is, even now, in hell.

Well, that brings up a real question: Why did Jesus choose Judas? Jesus said, “*Have [I] not...chosen you twelve...?*” (John 6:70). Every one of them Jesus chose. Did He make a mistake? Did Judas fool Jesus? Was Jesus a bad judge of character? No, Jesus didn’t make a mistake. He never has made a mistake; He never will make a

mistake. “He doeth all things well” (Mark 7:37). He knew beforehand that Judas did not believe. Let me prove that to you. Look, if you will, in John chapter 6 and verse 64—John chapter 6 and verse 64: Jesus said, *“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him”* (John 6:64). Now, just put that down big, and plain, and straight: Jesus was not taken by surprise by the betrayal. Jesus knew from the beginning. It wasn’t something that developed afterward. It was not something Jesus discovered. On the front end, Jesus knew that He was choosing a devil; Jesus knew that He was choosing an unbeliever.

Well, that brings up even a greater problem. We want to ask ourselves this question: If Jesus knew from the beginning that He was choosing a devil, why did He choose him? I tell you, when I’m looking for a staff member, I’m not looking for a devil, I’ll guarantee you. I wouldn’t want a devil to work with. I wouldn’t want an unbeliever to work with—and especially if that person was going to be my envoy, my disciple; if he’s going to represent me. If he’s supposed to spread my message and be my representative, why would I want to choose someone with my eyes wide open? Why would I want to choose a dirty double-crosser, a betrayer, to work with me? And yet, Jesus did. Jesus chose them. And, the Bible says that *“Jesus knew from the beginning who...believed not, and who [would] betray him”* (John 6:64).

As I’ve thought about it, I want to give you three, or four, or five, or six, or seven reasons—all depends—on why Jesus chose Judas.

I. Jesus Chose Judas to Fulfill Bible Prophecy

All right, number one: Jesus chose Judas to fulfill Bible prophecy. Turn to John chapter 13 for a moment, and look with me in verse 18—John chapter 13 and verse 18. Now, Jesus says in verse 18: *“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen”—now, He was quite aware of the ones that He had chosen—“I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe that I am he”* (John 13:18–19). That is, Jesus is saying, “I’m going to tell you before it ever happens that I’m going to be betrayed. I’m going to tell you before it ever comes to pass that someone is going to betray me. And, when it does come to pass, this fulfillment of prophecy is going to be one of the clear proofs that I am the Messiah.”

You see, Jesus, here, is quoting a scripture in Psalms chapter 41, verse 9: *“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat...bread [with me], hath lifted up his heel against me”* (Psalm 41:9). And, that psalm is what we call a “Messianic psalm.” Hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was born, it was prophesied that He

would be betrayed. And so, Jesus, that the scripture might be fulfilled, chose this man Judas. It was written in the heart and mind of God, and in the great plan of God, before Jesus was ever conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. Now, that tells me something right away, dear friend—that one of the great, great, great proofs of the deity of Christ is fulfilled scripture. Now, this is just one of the fulfilled scriptures concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. There are over three hundred and thirty-three precise details that are prophesied of the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—where He would be born, where He would sojourn. There are so many things I can't even get into them all. But, may I tell you, precious friend, that one way I know that I know that I know that Jesus is the Son of God is fulfilled prophecy.

There's a man in this church—a professional man, and I'm not going to call his name because I don't have the liberty to do so—but this man is a highly intelligent man. He came to see me. We talked for a while, and he said, "I'm not even certain that I believe there's a God, much less that Jesus Christ is the Son of God or that the Bible is the Word of God." I said, "Friend, if you want to know, you can know, for the Bible says in John 7:17: *'If any man [wills to] do [the] will [of God], he shall know...the doctrine, whether it be of God.'*" And, I gave him a book that dealt with fulfilled scripture, fulfilled prophecy, and I said, "I want you just to study this, and I want you to say like this to God: 'God, I don't know whether this is your Word or not. I don't know whether Jesus Christ is your Son or not. But, I want to know, and because I want to know, I'm making an honest investigation. And, because it is an honest investigation, I'll follow truth wherever it leads it, regardless of the cost.'" This man was reading the fulfilled prophecies that dealt with the Lord Jesus Christ, and he told his wife one night in their bedroom, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is impossible that these scriptures could have been fulfilled by chance." He got out of his bed and got on his knees and prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart and to forgive his sin and save him.

One of the great proofs of the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Christ is fulfilled scripture. Oh, how I thank God that Jesus allowed Judas to be one of the twelve, if for no other reason than that the prophecy might be fulfilled! The more I study this book, folks, the more I love it. You know, we've got some folks today calling the Bible into doubt. We've got some preachers today who think they ought to reexamine the Bible. I think we ought to reexamine those preachers. They are going to examine the Bible—reexamine the Bible—with a critical eye. I'd just as soon trust a group of blind men with a jug full of lightning bugs to examine the noonday sun. Thank God—thank God—for the fulfilled prophecy that shows us clearly and plainly that this book is God's Word.

II. Jesus Chose Judas to Be an Encouragement to Us

Now, let me give you another reason that I believe that Jesus chose Judas. Turn to Acts chapter 1, if you will. Isn't Jesus wonderful? Say, "Amen." Amen. That'll help me. All right, Acts chapter 1—look, if you will, in verse 15: *"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)"*—now, they've grown from twelve to a hundred and twenty—*"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake...concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; [inasmuch] as that field is called...Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias"* (Acts 1:15–23). And, I'm not going to read the rest of it, but I want to just give you the sense. Here was Judas, and he was one of the twelve. And, Judas dropped out. Judas was a turncoat. Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. But, here were eleven others who just kept right on going, and they said, "Let's just get someone to take his place and go right on preaching the gospel." The second reason, therefore, that Jesus chose Judas was to be an encouragement to us—to be an encouragement to us.

And, how is it an encouragement to us? Friend, you're going to meet Judases every day. There are some twentieth-century Judases. There are hypocrites in Bellevue Baptist Church. Did you know that? Did you know that? There are hypocrites in Bellevue Baptist Church. I doubt that there has been a church on the face of the earth that hasn't had hypocrites in it if it has very many members. One man said, "I'm looking for a perfect church to join." His friend said, "There are no perfect churches. And, if you find one, don't join it, 'cause you'd ruin it." Listen, there have always been hypocrites. I'm not—I'm not—thinking that lightly of hypocrisy or trying to play it down. But friend, parasites, like leeches, cling to the old ship of Zion. But, onward she sails, and heaven is her final destination. I'm on board, and Jesus is the captain; and I'm not going to let some Judas take the joy out of my life. These other eleven were there preaching the gospel, believing the Word. Don't you let some hypocrite stand between you and Jesus.

I'm telling you, there are some people—and some of them may be in this

congregation—are going to go to hell because you watched a movie named—called—*Elmer Gantry*. And there, Hollywood, diabolically, with the inspiration of the devil, wrote a movie, made some preacher of the gospel look like a womanizing, liquor-drinking, gambling, profiteering sort of a person. And, someone sits there and says, “Yeah, that’s what all those preachers are like.” I want to tell you, that’s not what all those preachers are like. The greatest group of men that I know on the face of this earth are God’s preachers. They love God. Most of them are getting paid about half of what they get paid in the world, and they’re working about twice as long. And, they’re serving, and praying, and seeking the face of God.

And, I want to tell you something else: the best people I know in this world are members of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they’re right here tonight. I love you. I thank God for you. You are a great people, and I’m not just buttering you up. People talk about hypocrites in the Church. They ought to come and be around a church like Bellevue. Sure, there may be some hypocrites. Sure, there may be a Judas—of course. But, any man is dishonest who says he’s not a Christian because of hypocrites. *I think he’s the biggest hypocrite, and I’ll tell you why: that man knows that some doctors are quacks, but when he gets sick, he seeks out a real doctor, doesn’t he? And, that man knows that some lawyers are shysters, but when he needs a lawyer, he seeks out a real one, doesn’t he? That man knows that some money is counterfeit, but he hasn’t thrown his away yet, has he?*

It is the counterfeit that proves the worthwhileness; it is the counterfeit that proves the validity of the real. *Men don’t counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills, because a twenty-dollar bill is worth something—about six dollars. And, that’s why they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills. And, every counterfeit Christian you see, every hypocrite that you see, every Judas that you see is but a confirmation of the worthwhileness and the validity of the faith that we preach.* Don’t you let some Judas keep you out of the kingdom of heaven. Don’t you let some Judas—somebody who betrays the Lord Jesus—keep you from serving Jesus. Thank God the other eleven did not quit, as Acts chapter 1 so wonderfully tells us.

III. Jesus Chose Judas to Show the Inadequacy of the Social Gospel

I want to tell you a third reason that I believe that Jesus chose Judas. Go back to John chapter 6—John chapter 6. Just turn left now in your Bible a little—all right, John chapter 6. I believe that Jesus chose Judas to show the inadequacy of the social gospel—to show the inadequacy of the social gospel. I want you to notice it was right after the feasting of the five thousand that Jesus talked about one of them being a devil.

Jesus had fed the five thousand. That is, He had given them bread to eat. And, I'm reading here in John chapter 6, beginning in verse 47 of the sixth chapter of John—these words: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die”* (John 6:47–50). And then, look, if you will, in verses 63 and 64: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there [be] some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him”* (John 6:63–64).

Now, Jesus had just fed hungry multitudes—and I believe in feeding the hungry. I preached about that this morning. I believe in clothing the unclothed, and I believe in housing the needy. But, I want to tell you with all of the function of my soul that there is really no such thing as a social gospel. Jesus had fed men's bodies, but Jesus said, *“You can eat this bread and perish, but the bread that I give you, My Word—they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). Judas was a materialist. I believe that one of the reasons that Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus is that he wanted a political Messiah. He wanted the Lord Jesus Christ to continue to feed the multitudes. He wanted the Lord Jesus Christ to throw off the yoke of Rome. But, Judas was a man who believed in the social gospel, but he did not believe in the true gospel. And, Jesus said (and Judas is the context) in verse 63: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit...they are life. But there are some of you that believe not”* (John 6:63–64). And, He spoke about Judas.

Now, today—today—we have a lot of people who are telling us that what we need to do is to get more involved in feeding our hungry world: “food for the hungry”—“food for the hungry.” And, you will misunderstand what I'm saying if you think for one little moment that I do not believe that we ought to send food to the hungry. But, my friend, if we do not give them Jesus, all we're doing is increasing the population of hell. Those people will live longer; they will reproduce more, and more people will go to hell unless we give them Jesus. And we, as Baptists, had better be very careful that we don't take our mission dollars and our Jesus dollars and make bread dollars out of them.

Now, understand what I'm talking about, because somebody could misunderstand me very carefully. Somebody could say, “Oh, that old, hard heart!” It's not a hard heart; it's a tender heart that's saying what I'm saying. Friend, what difference does it make if somebody eats vitamin-enriched food? What difference does it make if somebody sleeps on a foam-rubber mattress? What difference does it make if somebody is educated in a progressive school? What difference does it make if somebody rides in an air-conditioned automobile? What difference does it make if somebody is treated for

disease in a fine clinic? What difference does it make if a person dies without pain by the use of high-powered drugs? What difference does it make if he is buried in a memorial garden as lovely as any park? I say, what difference does it make if he must rise and face in the judgment a God that he knows not because he's not believed?

Here was Judas—here was Judas—who is a graphic illustration of the falsity of the so-called “social gospel” that cares for man’s body and cares for man’s mind, but neglects man’s soul. Man must be born again (John 3:7). We must say it, and say it, and preach it, and preach it—that man must be born again (John 3:7). He needs more than soap. He needs more than soup. He needs salvation. He needs Jesus. And, Judas is a graphic illustration of this. “Oh,” somebody says, “well, what people need today is a better environment.” Well, I want to ask you a question: Whoever had a better environment than Judas? Three years in the presence of the Son of God! But, he wasn’t born again—wasn’t born again.

IV. Jesus Chose Judas to Warn Church Members Who Have Never Been Saved

Now, let me give you another reason that I believe that Jesus chose Judas: not only that it might be a fulfillment of prophecy that proved the deity of Christ; not only that it might be an encouragement to us, as we see how the other disciples went on in spite of the hypocrisy of Judas; not only that it might be a solemn warning against the inadequacy of the social gospel; but I want to tell you a fourth reason that I believe that Jesus chose Judas—that it might be eternally a warning to church members who’ve never been saved.

I would say—and I have no way of proving this but from what I’ve known after thirty years in the ministry—that perhaps twenty percent or thirty percent of the people who are in this auditorium who are members of this church or somebody’s church are lost—maybe more. Lost—church members, who have gotten their name on the church roll somehow, but have not gotten their name in the Lamb’s Book of Life. They are religious but lost. Judas was religious but lost. Judas, as I said, came so close to salvation, but he didn’t have it. Judas kissed the door to heaven. He went to hell. And, there are millions of people who are going to go to hell surrounded by Sunday School pins, certificates for study courses, receipts for church offerings, and baptismal certificates. And, they’re going to die and go to hell because they have never, ever been born again.

Suppose we were to hold a conversation with Judas. “Mr. Judas, I want to ask you a question: Judas, have you ever been saved?” He says, “Well, I’m a church member.” “I didn’t ask you that, Judas. Judas, have you ever been born again?” “I’m a charter member.” “Judas, I didn’t ask you that. Are you saved?” “We’ve got a marvelous pastor.

His name is Jesus.” “Didn’t ask you that, Judas. Tell me when you found Christ and when He found you.” “I’m the treasurer of the church,” he says. Oh, my friend, I want to ask you, have you been saved? Does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you’re a child of God? You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I believe the plan of salvation.” Well, you can believe the plan of salvation and go straight to hell. *You’re not saved by the plan of salvation; you’re saved by the man of salvation.* His name is Jesus. And, there are a lot of people who know the plan, and they can give it just like that, but there never has been a time in their life when they’ve repented of their sin and trusted Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, I worked in the church. I serve. I taught in the beginner department since there was a beginner department at Bellevue. I’m a tither. I know how to pray. I’m in the WMU.” I had a WMU director down in Florida who got saved, and she made a whole lot better one.

Let me tell you something, friend: Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 21: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say [unto] me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”*—you know what that means? They spoke for God; they were authorities in religion—*“have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name...cast out [demons]?”*—they exorcised people—*“and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them...depart from me”*—now, watch it—*“ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:21–23). Unsaved person, do you know what Jesus calls it when you gave your tithe this week? Iniquity. You know what Jesus called it when you taught your Sunday School lesson, unsaved teacher? Iniquity. Unsaved deacon, do you know what Jesus called it when you did your counseling down at the front? Iniquity. *“Have we not...done many wonderful works?”* (Matthew 7:22). *“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:23). Any work that comes from a heart and a life of an unsaved person is, in the sight of God, iniquity.

Outwardly, this man was religious. I said he had an impeccable character. I was speaking just two nights ago to a seminary student who came to Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, and I asked him, “Tell me about your salvation—when you got saved.” Do you know what he told me? He said, “I got saved after I enrolled in the seminary and was here at the seminary. I got saved.” Now, that’s not...I’m not talking about the seminary. The seminary asks people to give their testimony, and he wrote out a testimony. But, he told me, “I wrote what I’d heard other people say and what I thought I ought to say. But,” he said, “when I got here...” And, thank God for that kind of an atmosphere—when you get in that atmosphere where sham cannot stay very long, when he sees reality, and thank God for a church where there’s reality. But, this seminary student got where there was reality, and he saw the reality in his life, of the life

of his wife, and he asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart, confessed Christ, and was baptized after he was a seminary student.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, was a missionary. But, one day he realized that he was lost, and he said, “I have come to convert the heathen, but who will convert me?” *The devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as he had the gutter.* He doesn’t care how religious you are. I don’t care how many times you’ve been baptized. I care not how many sermons you have taught or preached or how much money you’ve given. I want to ask you, have you been born again? Many people have been whitewashed rather than washed white. Thank God for that song “The Blood Shall Never Lose Its Power.” But, that blood must be applied to wash you whiter than snow.

I visited a sawmill on one occasion. I was surprised to see them take that big, old, crooked log that I didn’t think would make much of a piece of timber at all, and they put it on that cradle and ran it past that tremendous saw. And, they lopped off one side. And then, that man took a hook and turned it over, and they ran it through again and lopped off another side, and turned it over again and lopped off another side. And then...went through one more time. And, when they were finished, there was a straight piece of timber—straight on this side, that side, this side, and that side. But friend, if you looked at it from the end, the heart was still crooked. And, I’ve seen some people like that, who say, “Well, I’m not going to do this any more, and I’m not going to do that any more. And, I’m not going to do this any more, and I’m not going to do that any more. Look what a good boy I am.” But, I want to tell you, the Bible says, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”* (Jeremiah 17:9).

I was a crew counselor in a Billy Graham Crusade one time, down in Fort Pierce, Florida. And, there was a young girl who came into that service to give her heart to Jesus Christ. She was a debutante. And, her mother was there in the inquiry room after the service. Her mother was mortified that her sweet little darling had come to get saved. I never will forget what that lady—and I’m not going to describe her too much, ’cause I’d be unkind—but I never will forget what she said to that little girl. She said, “Sweetheart, you don’t need to be saved. You’re a good little girl. And, mother has taken you to church. Honey, it’s those old bad girls that need to be saved.” And, that teenage girl looked at her mother and said, “Mother, you can’t see my heart.” Thank God for her, and she realized that except the heart be changed... Judas outwardly was good, but his heart was never changed. I believe there’s a solemn warning to lost church members.

V. Jesus Chose Judas to Warn Us About the Deceiving Power of Sin

I want to tell you the last reason that I believe that Jesus chose Judas: that it might be a warning to us forevermore of the deceiving power of sin. I will never be convinced that Judas became one of the twelve intending to betray Jesus. I believe that Judas, at first, was a very sincere person—sincere but lost. He wanted to serve Jesus. He wanted to be a part of this great movement. But, the devil found fertile soil in Judas’s mind. The devil found an opening into which he could come.

Dear friend, let me tell you, the devil deceived Judas. It said in the Bible that the devil entered into Judas and *“the devil...put into [Judas’s mind]...to betray [Jesus]”* (John 13:2). I’m certain that Judas never really thought that he would do such a thing. And, later on, Judas is overtaken with remorse. It’s not that he repents. It’s not that he gets saved. But, he says, *“I...betrayed...innocent blood”* (Matthew 27:4). He returns the thirty pieces of silver that he sold Jesus for and he goes out in remorse. And, with trembling fingers, he fastens a hangman’s noose. He puts that hangman’s noose around his neck; ties the other end of the rope to an overhanging limb out over some precipice, I suppose; and then, to escape the horror within him, he steps off of that precipice into the hell before him. And, there he dangles and swings at the end of that rope.

Perhaps it was days that he was there, because there are two scriptures—one in Matthew chapter 27, I believe it is. It says that Judas *“went [out] and hanged himself”* (Matthew 27:5). But then, in Acts, the first chapter, we find out that he *“[fell] headlong...and...his bowels gushed out”* (Acts 1:18). I was listening to a liberal the other day, and he said, “See, that proves that the Bible contradicts itself.” Oh, friend, how silly that is! There’s no contradiction there. I’ll tell you exactly what I believe happened: that Judas is hanging there at the end of that rope; he’s hanging there, a suicide in remorse, deceived by the devil, with his conscience aflame by the fires of torment. And so, he commits suicide. Day after day, that body hangs there. The face turns blue. The swollen tongue is covered with flies. The birds have come and picked the eyes from their sockets. And, the skin has begun to crack, and it looks like an overripe melon. And, somebody finally comes across that body hanging, dangling from the end of that rope. It’s a disgusting sight. And, I can see that individual as he takes his sword, and holds his hand to keep the stench away, and goes and cuts it down. And, the body of Judas falls and bursts asunder, and his bowels run all over the ground.

And, you say, “My goodness, Pastor. That’s not pretty.” I didn’t mean for it to be pretty. Sin is not pretty. Oh, if people could only see the end of sin! The devil promises much, but he pays so little. And, I see Judas now dangling on the end of that rope. But,

you see, it's not the end of Judas—it's not the end of Judas. Do you know what Jesus said of Judas? Jesus said of Judas, *"It [would be better] for that man...had [he] not been born"* (Matthew 26:24) in Matthew chapter 26, verse 24. It's not that he just committed suicide. What a fool he was to commit suicide! How much better would it have been had he repented of his sin and gotten saved! He didn't have to commit suicide. One man told Bob Jones, "I'm going to take a gun and blow my brains out and end it all." Bob Jones said, "You can't end it all. If you had any brains to blow out, you'd know it." Judas didn't end it all. While Judas's body was swinging from that rope, Judas was already in hell. And, Jesus said, *"It had been [better] for that man [that he'd] not been born"* (Matthew 26:24).

Listen to me tonight: if you're not born twice, the day will come when you will wish that you had never been born at all. Did you hear that? If you've not been born twice, and you don't get born twice, the day will come when you'll wish that you'd not been born at all. Jesus said, *"It [was better] for that man [that] he had not been born"* (Matthew 26:24).

"Well," you say, "Brother Rogers, Judas evidently was a very wicked person, and I'll never be as wicked as Judas." But, I'm going to tell you something: if you don't get saved, you're going to hell with Judas. Do you know what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12, verse 30? *"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad"* (Matthew 12:30). Do you know what that means? It means that if you're not in the Jesus crowd, you're in the Judas crowd. Now, which crowd are you in? There are only two. If you're not in the Jesus crowd, you're in the Judas crowd. *"He that is not with me is against me"* (Matthew 12:30). You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, I haven't sinned so much." Friend, it is not the amount of sin—it is the fact of sin—that makes us sinners. *"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [the same] is guilty of all"* (James 2:10). **More people drown in nine feet of water than drown in ninety feet of water. Did you know that? It's not the amount of sin; it's the fact of sin.** Have you been born again? Jesus would have saved Judas. Sometimes people get the tragic idea that there was nothing that Judas could have done. I tell you, Jesus would have saved Judas if he'd had come to Him and asked Him to save him. And, Jesus will save you, for the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17)

Conclusion

Imagine that you get sick. You go to the doctor, and you say, "Doctor, I've been feeling very badly. Doctor, would you examine me?" And, the doctor examines you, and the doctor gets an ashen look on his face. And, you say, "Doctor, you've got such a serious look on your face. Doctor, I believe something must be very serious with me. Please,

Doctor, tell me the truth.” He says, “Do you want me to tell you the absolute truth?” “Yes, Doctor.” “You have a very serious disease, and you’re going to die in a matter of weeks.” “Well,” you say, “Doctor, I don’t want to die. I have so many plans. There is so much I want to do, Doctor. Doctor, is there no remedy? Is there no cure?” And, the doctor says there is a cure, but it’s so rare and so costly. There is a serum—there is a medicine—that can save your life, but it would cost a king’s ransom. “Do you have any insurance?” “No, sir.” “Do you have any savings?” “No, sir. But Doctor, you just can’t let me die. Doctor, if there’s a serum, if there’s a way, there must be a foundation; there must be something. I don’t want to die. Please, Doctor, do something.” The doctor says, “Very well, let me see what I can do.” And, he goes off, and he stays for several days.

And then, he comes back to your bedside, and when you look at him, you can hardly recognize him. He doesn’t look like the man that left. His eyes are sunken back in his head—dark circles under his eyes. His hair is disheveled. He has several days’ growth of beard. And, besides that, his clothes are torn and bloodstained. His hands are trembling. But, in his hand he has a little vial of medicine, a serum. You look at him, and you say, “Doctor, is that you? Doctor, where have you been? What has happened to you, Doctor? Tell me.” He said, “I’ve been to get this medicine.” He said, “I went to every foundation, every board. I didn’t have enough money; and so, I took my own money out of the bank. And, that was not enough money; and so, I mortgaged my own house in order to get this medicine for you”—have you ever known a doctor who would do that?—“I mortgaged my house to get this medicine for you. And, on my way over here I was in such a rush to get to your bedside, I wrecked my automobile. And, my only son was in the car with me. I’ve just come from the morgue. My precious son is in the morgue. The blood that you see on my shirt is the blood of my little boy. Here’s the medicine bought with the fearful price. Take it. You’ll live. Take it.”

Now, suppose you took that medicine. You held it up for a while and looked at it and then dashed it on the floor. And, the vial broke, and the contents ran out in the rug as the horrified doctor looks with incredulity at what you’ve done. And then, suppose you pointed your finger in the face of that doctor and said, “Doctor, if I die, it’ll be your fault.” No—ten thousand times no! If that man dies, it’ll be his fault—amen?—his fault. And, I want to tell you, if you die and go to hell, you will never be able to point your finger in the face of God and say, “God, it was your fault.” I want to tell you that God bankrupted heaven that you might be saved. I want to tell you that the great physician, Almighty God, gave His only begotten Son, that you might be saved. And I, as His representative tonight, am here to offer you salvation. And, I say receive Jesus, and you’ll live; refuse Jesus, and you’ll die. But, if you do, it won’t be my fault—and indeed, it will not be God’s. Judas kissed the door to heaven, and he went to hell. He was so close, but he

never received Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Father, I pray tonight that many in this building will say "yes" to Jesus Christ. I pray, O God, with all of my heart, that you, dear Lord, would save the lost in this building. Don't let anyone leave without Jesus. O Lord, I know that you'll not force them to come, but, O Spirit of the living God, open their hearts and minds to believe the gospel. Draw them, Holy Spirit. Bring them, I pray. I pray that you'll save church members, people who may be like Judas who will little dream how much the devil could deceive them if they don't get saved. Lord, I pray that you'll save those tonight who've never been members of anyone's church. Lord, just save many, and bless those who are saved who have other decisions that they need to make. Please, Lord, bless the invitation for Jesus's sake. Amen.

Stop Enduring Religion

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 15, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 7:37–39

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

JOHN 7:37–38

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Introduction

Stop enduring religion. Turn with me please to John chapter seven, and I begin reading in verse thirty-seven—John chapter seven and verse thirty-seven. I love to hear the rustle of those pages. Sounds like angel wings fluttering when I hear you turning those pages. That’s wonderful. You’ll get significantly more out of any message if you’ll keep the Bible in front of you.

This is verse thirty-seven: In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly—that is, out of his innermost being—shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was

not yet glorified.)

Now, let me give you the background for this passage of Scripture. The Jews had many ceremonies and many feasts, but there was one that outdid them all when it came to joy in hilarity and festivity. As a matter of fact, one said, “If you have not seen the feast of tabernacles, you don’t even know what rejoicing in hilarity is.” This feast was a great feast that the Jews would perform, and in the climax of that feast, the priest would go down to the pool of Siloam. And he would fill a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam, and then he would bring that water back, and the people would be following him, and they would be leaping and dancing, playing cymbals, and chanting, and praising. And the priest would come with that water from the pool of Siloam, and he would pour it out there at the altar. And as he did, all hilarity would break forth. Now, Jesus is watching this. Jesus sees this ceremony. Jesus sees their ecstasy, their joy, their hilarity. They’re leaping. They’re dancing. They’re praising, and on the last day, right in the midst of all of that, Jesus who was normally quiet—the Bible says of Him, “He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets”—and yet at this time, Jesus could contain himself no more. And the Bible says that He stood and He literally shouted, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

Now, what’s all of this about? Well, Jesus saw that ceremony. He saw them chanting from the psalms. With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation, and Jesus Christ himself was that well of salvation. Every Old Testament ceremony, every Old Testament feast, all of it, prophesied the Lord Jesus. All of it portrayed the Lord Jesus. All of it pictured the Lord Jesus. And there He was, the very water of life, right in their midst. He was right there. They’re paying no attention to Him. They didn’t even understand Him. There they were, going through their ritual. There they were going on with their religion. There they were having their feast, and in the midst of it all was the very water of life.

Now, what Jesus knew was this: if after it was over, after all that hilarity, after all that rejoicing, after all of that singing and dancing, Jesus knew that then they would go back to their homes, and all of that would be a memory. They would go back to their own, back to their old heartaches, back to their own tears, back to their own fears, back to their own faults and failures and foibles, and it would all be gone, only a memory, only a religious exercise, only a ritual that gave joy for a moment but would not last, a pitcher of water poured out on an altar. And Jesus said, “If you’re really thirsty, come to me and drink.” What Jesus was saying is, “It is time to stop enduring religion, and start enjoying salvation.”

Now, most people in America don’t need religion. We’ve got enough religion. What we need is a personal, vital relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, true salvation with joy. Shall ye draw water from the wells of salvation? What a wonderful,

wonderful lesson there is for us here today. Jesus says, “Come unto me and drink.”

I have an evangelist friend who was on an airplane one time, and a little stewardess came by, and said, “Sir, would you like a drink?” She was talking about alcoholic beverage. I think it’s a crying shame they serve that on an airplane. I think it’s a crying shame that young ladies and gentlemen have to serve it. But she said to him, “Do you want a drink?” His name was Mike, and I like what he said to her. Mike said to her, “No, thank you.” He said, “I had drink a number of years ago that satisfied me completely.” She said, “You did? Must have been some drink.” “Oh,” he said, “it was.” She said, “What was it?” He said, “Well, you serve all these other people, and come back, and I’ll tell you what it was.” So she served everybody else, and came, and sat down beside him, strapped herself in, and said, “Tell me about it.” And he did. That drink is the Lord Jesus, who says, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest. Come unto me and drink. But Jesus is talking here about salvation, yes, but more than salvation. Because the Bible says that he was speaking of the Holy Spirit; that, when people believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they will receive the Holy Spirit. And then there will be in them a well of water springing up unto eternal life. There will be in them rivers of revival. And Jesus said, “Out of that person will flow, out of his innermost being will flow a river of living water.”

Is that your experience? Is there in you a river bubbling up? Is there in you a satisfaction because you have drunk deeply of Jesus? But more than a satisfaction, are you being a blessing? Is your life overflowing with blessing? It’s an amazement to me how many people today are trying to find the answer.

A. Some Think the Answer Is Intellectual

Some people think that the answer is intellectual. They think if they can just learn more facts, if they can just learn more theology, if they can just learn more history, if they can just learn more of this or that. And so they go from class to class, and church to church, with their heads getting fuller, and their hearts getting emptier. They know that the answer is not intellectual.

B. Some Think the Answer Is Activity

Others think that the answer is in activity. If they can just do more, if they can just work harder, if they can just stay busy doing church work—a busy Christian is a happy Christian, so go to work. And people wear their fingers to the bone, and sometimes even ruin their domestic tranquility, by never being at home, doing this thing, and doing that thing, trudging to church every time the doors are open, but still no reality in their lives.

C. Some Think the Answer is Emotional

Others think that the answer is emotional. We’ve got this going now. There are people

who are going to meetings and literally falling on the floor and laughing hysterically, or even roaring like lions, barking like dogs, writhing on the ground, lying prostrate, thinking, man, if I could have some great emotional experience, maybe that'll be the answer. And for a while, like those people on the last day of the feast, they have an ecstasy; but tomorrow they have a memory, that's all, trying to get back to that state of emotionalism that they were once in. And like a person on narcotics, this time it takes a little bigger dose to get as high as they were yesterday.

Is the answer intellectual? Is the answer in the activities that we do? Is the answer in emotionalism? And then, there's the answer that the Pharisee has. He thinks that the answer to life is the way that he lives, primarily noted by what he doesn't do. I don't do this. I don't do that, and I don't this, and I don't do that. And so the proud Pharisee, as he trims his limbs, he strengthens his root, becomes a bitter, hard Pharisee. He has religion, but he doesn't have reality. He does not know what Jesus Christ is talking about. And there are many in America who do not know they have religion. *It's time they stopped enduring religion, and started enjoying salvation.* It is time that they came to understand what the great heart of Jesus longed for. When Jesus on that last day stood up and cried, and said to them what He's saying to you, "Are you thirsty? Come to me and drink." And out of your innermost being will flow a river of living water.

I. The Subjects: The Thirsty

Now, there are four simple steps. I want you to see what they are. First of all, you've got to understand who the subjects are that He's speaking to. To whom is He speaking? He's not speaking to everybody. He's speaking to thirsty people. There's a big "if" here. Look at it. Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst. That's all prefaced by this, "Are you thirsty?" "Well," you say, "God knows I'm empty." I didn't ask if you were empty. I asked, "Are you thirsty?" My car has been empty many times, never once been thirsty. I mean, I'm talking about the gas tank. Are you thirsty or are you simply satisfied?

You see, there are not a lot of thirsty people today. There are people who come to church on Sunday morning like they've done God a wild favor, but they don't come seeking God. They don't come with a burning, blistering thirst. Oh, some might have a shallow thirst. Those who have a shallow thirst will get a shallow satisfaction. Many are not thirsty at all, because they are filled with the stagnant waters of self-love and worldliness. I'm gonna tell you this. I don't know how much of God you have, but I'll tell you, you have all you want. It's not your job to persuade God to fill you. He wants to fill you. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. If you don't have any more, it's because you don't want any more. It's not because God somehow has neglected you. You've neglected God. And, if you're

not thirsty, I would suggest that the very first thing you do is to analyze your life, and pray that God would help you to get things in order, that God would help you to see things in reality, that God would give you the big picture, that God would give to you and grant to you a burning, blistering thirst, that you would say, “I’m done with religion. I want reality. I am thirsty today for that which is real.” The subject’s the thirsty ones.

II. The Source: Jesus Christ

Something else you need to understand. You need to understand the source. Jesus said, “If you thirst, come to me.” He was talking of himself. You come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, folks, that’s the reason I was so blessed by Omar Hamada’s song, In Christ Alone. You don’t come to religion. You don’t come to rituals. You don’t come to rules. You don’t come to resolve. You don’t even clean up your life, and then say, “Lord, here it is. Fill me.” It’s one of the biggest mistakes we make. Sometimes we get the idea that we want more of God. We want that fullness of the Spirit. We want that Living Water. We want that reality, and we think, well, you know, if I can just clean up my life, if I can just get right, if I can just somehow discipline myself enough, pray enough, study enough, work enough, live clean enough, then I’ll be a candidate for the blessing. All that is, is a work’s righteousness, and you’ll never ever make it. You’re like a man in quicksand. The more you struggle, the deeper you sink.

If I’ve ever learned anything, and God help me not to forget it, and to keep on learning it—come up close. If you don’t hear anything else in this message, I want you to listen to this—holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Write it on your heart right now. Holiness is not the way to Christ. You don’t work your way to the way. He is the Way. Get on it. I mean, don’t get the idea that if you could live right, God will fill you with the Holy Spirit. You can’t live right until you are filled with the Holy Spirit. I mean, if you could do all of those things in order to be filled, why do you need to be filled anyway?

Do you understand what I’m saying? It’s like the banker. Do you want to borrow money? Do you know how you can get a banker to loan you money? Just go down there and prove to him you don’t need any. Then he’ll loan you some. Well, friend, God’s not that way. I mean, it is grace. We come to Jesus—to Jesus.

Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me. O Lamb of God, I come to thee. I come. Come ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and worn. Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Don’t wait till you’re better. Don’t wait till you’re stronger. Bring to Him your weakness. Bring to Him your fears. Bring to Him your failures. Bring to Him your heartaches. Bring it all to Jesus. Jesus throws open His arms to you today, and says, “Are you thirsty? Come to me. Come to me.” Oh, if we could only learn that. I’m not saying that you come clinging to your sins. I’m not saying that you come to Him with

your fingers crossed behind your back. I'm not saying that you come to Him, and at the same time intend to cling to Satan and this world. Oh no. Let go of everything; but come, come to Jesus.

III. The Secret: Come to Me and Drink

The subjects? The thirsty ones. The source? Jesus Christ himself. The secret? Come to me and drink.

Look in verse thirty-seven: In that last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. Now, what does that mean? How do you drink? You drink by faith. The next verse explains it. He that believeth on me—he that believeth on me. You drink in the Christ. You appropriate, assimilate Jesus by faith. Come and drink. Now, the problem today is this: that many will come this far with me in this message and be with me one hundred percent. But at this point, they drop out. Now, they don't mean to drop out. They just drop out. They say, "Yes, indeed, I am thirsty. Yes, indeed, Christ is the answer." But they never really believe that they dare take what He promises. And so, somehow, it gets in the margin of the Bible, somehow, it gets in the notebook, somehow, it gets in the head, but it never gets down in the heart. It is never appropriated. You must drink. You must appropriate that which God has for you, and you do it by faith. Drinking is not passive. It is active. There comes a time when you take the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and say, "Yes, He is mine. I claim all that you have for me, Lord Jesus. I believe in you. I do."

Suppose you're on the desert. Let's suppose you've been there for several days. Your body is dehydrated. Your tongue is dry. Your mouth is parched. Your lips are cracked. You're perishing for water, and you know that you need water. Nobody has to explain to you what water is. Nobody has to tell you that you're thirsty. You know that. And then somebody comes to you, out there in the dessert, somehow miraculously appears, and there he is with a tall glass of water. We'll even put a couple of ice cubes in it. Put some little beads running down the side of it. Tall, cool, clear, sparkling, lifesaving, life-sustaining water—there it is. By the way, what would that man pay for that glass of water—a dollar, two, ten, fifty, one hundred, ten thousand? You name it. Price is not an object. If he has it, he'll pay it, right? All that a man has will he give for his life.

You see. That's the mark of a thirsty man. You see these people who have got these side issues, and so forth. They're not really thirsty. But when a man is truly thirsty, the price is not an object. So, thank God, this water of life is absolutely free, and it costs everything. Now that's what we would call a paradox. I mean, you have to give everything to Jesus, and yet it is absolutely, totally free.

There it is, that glass of water. Now, suppose the bearer of that water says to this

man, “I brought this for you. I want you to have it. Here it is.”

Now, suppose you were to get out your notebook, and you say, “Mmm hmm, let me get this down, and da da da da, da da da da, da da da da. It’s water. It’s necessary. You brought it for me. There it is. You want me to drink,” and so forth, and you begin to make notes, and think about it, and so forth. And, he says, “Yes, but now drink.” “Oh,” you say. “Water, that’s what I need. Boy, that sure is cool water, clear, da da da da da da. Well, drink. Well I, you know, I don’t think I’m qualified to do that. I don’t think I ought to do that.” And I’m wondering what’s wrong with this person. Why will he not by faith and obedience appropriate that which is offered to him?

People come to church on Sunday morning with no more intention of doing what the minister asks them to do than obeying what they saw portrayed on television on Saturday night. It’s sort of something they watch. It’s sort of something they just come, and sit, and watch. Folks, there comes a time when you need to—D-R-I-N-K—drink. There comes a time when you need to believe Him, and say, “My heart is thirsty for the blessing. I will receive the Lord Jesus. I take Him now. I take Him by faith. I appropriate. I assimilate. I believe. I receive. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. I receive you. I drink into you. I do, and I do right now.”

IV. The Supply: Rivers of Living Water

Now, we’ve talked about the subjects, and the source, and the secret. Let’s talk about the supply. I love this part. Listen. Verse 38: he that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his inner most being shall flow rivers of living water. Not only will there be an income; there will be an outflow. There will be springing up in you, a river of revival, a river of blessing. Now, here’s the problem. Here’s the problem. The Bible says, “As the scripture hath said.” Jesus is quoting the Scripture. Did you know that you can get your concordance, and try to find this scripture in the Old Testament, and you can’t find it? That’s interesting. Jesus said, “As the scripture hath said, out of his belly—out of his innermost being—shall flow rivers of living water.” And yet you don’t find that verse in the Bible. Does that mean that Jesus was wrong? Of course not! He’s never wrong. What He’s referring to, I believe, is not a verse, but He’s referring to a number of verses. And that’s the sum total of them found in Ezekiel chapter 47. So just turn to Ezekiel chapter 47. Now, if you’ve got a Bible like mine, that’s page 1,101. Other than that, you have to find it for yourself—Ezekiel chapter 47. Now, I want you to turn to this, because all that Jesus is saying is based on this. “As the scripture hath said, out of his inner most being shall flow rivers of living water.” Jesus is saying that, when you are filled with the Spirit, when you are saved and filled with the Spirit, your life is going to be overflowing with joy. It’s going to be overflowing with praise. It’s going to be overflowing with testimony. It’s going to be overflowing with service.

Are you a normal Christian? I didn't ask if you were an average Christian. The average Christian is not a normal Christian. He's subnormal. Boy, we need to make a difference between the average and the normal. You'll find the normal in the Bible. You'll find the average on Sunday morning in church. Are you a normal Christian? What is a normal Christian? A normal Christian, one who's stopped enduring religion and started to enjoy salvation, is one not only who is having his own needs met, but is able to meet the needs of others. He has not become merely a reservoir. He has become a river. Now, most folks come on Sunday, just thinking, boy, if I can just get a blessing. I mean, if I can just have my needs met, boy, how wonderful it would be if I could just have my thirst assuaged. How many of us say, "O God, I want to be a blessing. I want the outflow of my life to be a river of revival. I want out of my innermost being to flow a river of living water."

Well, let's see if we can learn the secret in Ezekiel chapter 47. Here's a prophecy, I believe, of what we're talking about. This passage is very interesting. Here's a vision that Ezekiel saw, and I believe that Jesus was talking about here. Afterward, he brought me again to the door of the house. Now, the house that he's talking about is the temple of God. The temple in the Old Testament was a picture and a prophecy of the believer today. The Bible says that we are temples of God. Now remember this: In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament, God has a people for His temple. That Old Testament temple just like that Old Testament feast of tabernacles; it's a picture of things to come, and of spiritual things.

And so, afterward, he brought me again to the door of the house, the temple; and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house at the south side of the altar.

A. The Mysterious Source of This River

Now, notice the mysterious source of this river. It's coming out of the temple—out of the temple. There comes a mysterious river, and it flows right past the altar. It always does. It always does. The altar speaks of Christ crucified, and if you want that river of living water to flow out of you, it will always, forever, flow past the altar, past the cross. What is the cross? Is a gigantic "I" crossed out—no longer I, but Christ. And out of my innermost being, out of the house of God, which house I am; out of the temple, will flow a river. That's the mysterious source of it.

B. The Marked Course of This River

I want you to notice the marked course of it. Look at verses two through six: Then he brought me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me by the way unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right

side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went for the eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. And he measured a thousand cubits, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. And he measured a thousand and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. What a mysterious river! It keeps getting wider, and deeper, and it has no tributaries. It just keeps rising up. This is the course of the river.

In 500-yard increments, first of all, the water is ankle-deep; then it's knee-deep; then it's waste-deep; and then it's water that engulfs and overwhelms, water to swim in. And then the writer of this passage of Scripture says, in verse six, "Son of man, hast thou seen this—is there a river of revival flowing out of you? At first, ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then up to the waste, and then a current that picks you up, and sweeps you along. You'll never get more of the Spirit, but He needs to get more of you. I mean some of us this morning are ankle-deep. Are you satisfied? I hope you move to knee-deep. Some are knee-deep. Are you satisfied? I hope it'll move up to your loins. And some of you have seen this up to this far, but I pray God today there will be a river flowing out of your life that will engulf and sweep you, and all that comes with it along with it.

C. The Mighty Force of This River

There's the mysterious source of this river. There is the marked course of this river. There is the mighty force of this river, and I wish I had more time for all of these. But I want you to see what happens when this river begins to flow. Look, if you will now, in verses seven through nine: And when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. And he said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and into the sea: which brought forth, which being brought forth into the sea, the waters will be healed.

Now, those of you who've gone with me to Israel, you're gonna be blessed right now, because this is going to make more sense to you than anybody else. But if you were to go the temple mount, and if you were to stand and face the east—I believe I'm facing east right now—you would be looking out to the desert, and you would be on Mount Moriah, 2,700 feet above sea level. And then, the terrain would begin to drop down, down, down, down, down, down to sea level, but it would keep on dropping, down, down, down, down, down to the lowest spot on earth, 1,300 feet below sea level, the Dead Sea, with it's dead, leaden waters.

Now, this is what he's talking about. He said, "I saw the temple. I saw a river come up. It flowed passed the altar, and it began to go through down the desert, down through the wilderness, down, down, down, down, down to the Dead Sea. That's what he saw. And I believe that Jesus Christ was talking about this, when He said, "As the

scripture said, out of his inner most being will flow rivers of living water.”

1. There Will Be Life Where There Once Was Death

And what He is saying is this—and please listen: There will be life where there was once death, when the river begins to flow out of you.

And then, look, if you will, in verse ten. Look at it now in verse ten: And it shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; and they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. There’ll be as many fish in the Dead Sea as there are in the Mediterranean.

2. There Will Be Success Where There Once Was Failure

There will be life where there is death. There will be success where there’s failure. How many of us have wanted to be fishers of men. But, we’re fishing in deadened, leaden waters. And the problem is not with Dead Sea. The problem is with us, because we’ve not poured into it a river of living water.

3. There Will Be Fruitfulness Where There Once Was Barrenness

Thirdly, there’ll be fruitfulness where there was barrenness. Look, if you will, in verse 12: And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side, and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary. Is your life a fruitful life or a barren life? Galatians 5, verse 22, speaks of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Is there a river flowing out of you that causes fruitfulness where there was once barrenness?

4. There Will Be Health Where There Once Was Sickness

And, last of all, there will be health where there was once sickness. Look in the last part of verse 12: And the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. Boy, I’m telling you this old sick, deadly world, this barren desert, needs life. It needs the fruit of the Spirit. It needs healing.

Conclusion

Folks, look at your pastor now. Our world is sick. There is a Dead Sea out there, and Jesus said, “If you thirst, come to me, and drink, and you’ll be satisfied.” But more than that, there’ll be in you a river of living water. And where there was death, there’ll be life. Where there was failure, there’ll be success. And where there was barrenness, there’ll be fruit. And where there’s sickness, there’ll be health. Son of man, have you seen this? Let’s pray.

O God, seal the message to our hearts. And I pray today that many thirsty souls will

come to Jesus and drink. Amen. Look at me. Every eye here—don't gather your books; don't even think about it. Just look right here. Look right here. Some of you have been members of this church and have never been saved. You need to come to Jesus today, and stop enduring religion, and start enjoying salvation. Some of you have been saved, but you've drunk in such a shallow way. You've had a shallow thirst and a shallow satisfaction. You're only ankle deep. You need to drink deep of our Lord, and let this river flow deeply out of you.

Some of you need to be saved, who are not members of this church or any church. You've never been, quote, religious. Maybe it's religion that's turned you off. Well, I've got good news for you. Jesus will never disappoint you. Come to Jesus today. I'm not asking you to believe in Adrian, not asking you to believe in Bellevue, not asking you to believe in the word Baptist. I'm asking you to come to Jesus Christ. Give Him your heart. Give Him your life. He died for you. I promise you, on the authority of His Word, He will forgive your every sin. He will meet the deepest longing of your heart. There's not a sin He cannot forgive, and not a legitimate longing He's not the answer to. Come to Jesus. When we sing in a moment, the ministers of this church are going to stand here at head of each of these aisles. And those of you who say, "Lord Jesus, I receive you now as my personal Lord and Savior, I, by faith, drink of you. I want you to leave your seat and come.

Those of you who say, "I need to go deeper. I want more. I want someone to pray with me," you might come. Those of you who need to place your membership in Bellevue; if you're saved, and want to be a part of the Bellevue family, you come. There's a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles. You say, "Pastor, I don't know what I'd say, when I go down there." Don't worry about that at all. The minister will help you and guide you. You just come, and express your heart, and let's take it from there. Let's stand together. Lord, I believe. You step out and come.

The Abundant Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 22, 1986

Main Scripture Text: John 7:37–39

*“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said,
out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”*

JOHN 7:38

Outline

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- C. Some People Think the Answer Is Legalism
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Introduction

John 7:37–39: *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly”—that literally means “out of his innermost being”—“shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”* (John 7:37–39) Now, my dear friends, I want to talk to you about the life that overflows—the overflowing life, or, if you will, “The Abundant Life.”

I want you to get the background for this passage of Scripture. The time is during the Feast of the Tabernacles, and the Feast of the Tabernacles had a climactic ceremony. The high priest would go to the Pool of Siloam. He would fill a golden pitcher with water; and then, he would carry that pitcher back to the temple and pour that water out at the altar. Then, there would be a procession following him. There would be music, and dancing, and praising, and “hosannas.” There would be a time of ecstasy, and joy, and religious fervor, and the people would sing with joy, *“Shall ye draw [waters from] the*

wells of salvation[?]" (Isaiah 12:3) It was the highlight—it was the epitome—of the feast.

Now, the Bible says that Jesus was there that day, and all of that pictured Him. Jesus is that well of salvation. Jesus really is the water of life. It was all a symbol of Jesus. It was all a picture of Jesus. It was all a prophecy of Jesus. But the people didn't understand that. They were going through the ceremony. They were going through the routine. They were going through the ritual. But they didn't really understand that it was all about the Lord Jesus. And Jesus knew that this same crowd that was leaping, and dancing, and shouting, and praising, the next day would go back to the same old fears, the same old failures, the same old faults, and the same old foibles. He knew that they would go back to the same failures. He knew that they did not have reality—they had religion, but they did not have reality. They had form, but they did not have God. They had ceremony, but they did not have Christ the Messiah. And, in His heart, there was something that welled up, and right in the middle of that ceremony, Jesus, the Bible says, stood and cried. (John 7:37) That means He shouted. It was just not a normal thing. I can see Him almost, as He cups His hands and shouts above the tumult: *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink,"* (John 7:37) because it was all about the Lord Jesus Christ. But it was more than about the Lord Jesus Christ; it was really about the Holy Spirit, because the Bible says this: *"spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."* (John 7:39) Now, Jesus was not talking about salvation alone, but He was talking about the Spirit-filled life. And I want to talk to you about that same Spirit-filled life. *"This spake [Jesus] of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."* (John 7:39)

Now, there are some of you tonight who are saved, but you're not Spirit-filled. You have been to Calvary for a pardon, but you haven't been to Pentecost for power. Somehow you've gotten bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost. You're saved, but you don't have any victory. You remind me of Lazarus, when Lazarus came out of that grave. Jesus said, *"Lazarus, come forth,"* (John 11:43) and the Bible says that Lazarus *"came forth, bound hand and foot."* (John 11:44) Can you see him, an animated mummy, coming out of that grave? He can hardly move, and Jesus said, *"Loose him, and let him go."* (John 11:44) Lazarus had life, but he didn't have liberty. And there are so many folks like that: they come from the grave, but they've not yet known the liberty of the new life; they have not yet been set free.

Now, Jesus, here, is speaking of the freedom, and the power, and the liberty that the Holy Spirit of God will give. Why are so many churches failing? What is the answer?

A. Some People Think the Answer Is Intellectualism

Some people think that the answer is intellectual. They think that if we can just learn more, then we're going to be liberated. But folks, I can tell you people who know

plenty—and, I mean, they can split a theological hair in sixteen equal divisions. They know Greek, and they know Hebrew—but they don't know the power of God. The answer is not in intellectualism. And people trudge from church to church and class to class while their heads get fuller and their hearts get emptier. I'm not against study, but friend, study is not the answer.

B. Some People Think the Answer Is Emotionalism

There are other people who don't think the answer is intellectual; they think the answer is emotional. They think if they can get in a particular type of church and get hyped up—if they have a certain kind of rhythmic music, or a certain kind of persuasive preaching, or a certain type of altar call; or, if they can find themselves worked up into some sort of ecstasy, some sort of emotional spasm—then they can say, “Hey, praise God! This is it. He touched me.” But then, they go out, and the glow goes, the experience fades, and all they have is the memory of ecstasy. But they have no power; they have no life. And the answer is not emotional.

C. Some People Think the Answer Is Legalism

Then, there are other people who think that the answer is the answer of the Pharisee: they think that power comes in giving up things, so they don't do this and they don't do that. They quit this, and they don't go here any more; and they don't look at this, and they don't say this. “By the way, we need more separated living,” they say. But friend, that's not the answer. The Pharisees didn't do any of those things. The Pharisees lived that strict, narrow, punctilious life, where they wouldn't do this and they wouldn't do that. And they were so narrow, and they were so careful; but they were so filled with powerlessness. And, you see, if you just simply try and give up things, and that's all, then while you prune the limbs, you just strengthen the root. And what you become is a cold, proud, bitter Pharisee.

D. Some People Think the Answer Is Activity

There are other people who think that the answer, therefore, must be in Christian activity. There are people who think that, “If I could just get busy for Jesus, you know, then I would have power in my life. A busy Christian is a happy Christian, and so, just work, work, work, work.” And, I'm not against working. Dear friend, there are so many people who are doing things for Jesus rather than Jesus doing something through them. A lot of Baptists are very busy. Dr. Vance Havner, bless his heart, said, “If Baptists had a patron saint, he'd be Saint Vitus.” We are so busy and yet so devoid of power.

Now, where is the answer? Jesus gives us the answer here in John 7:37, when He says, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...[and] out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* (John 7:37–38) There will be, indeed, a life that overflows.

Now, there are four basic steps in the formula that Jesus gives, as I've looked at it and thought about it.

I. You Must Understand the Subjects

First of all, the very first thing that you would understand is this: you must understand the subjects, the people to whom Jesus is speaking. Notice the entire thing is predicated by a little word, *if*: “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*” (John 7:37) Now, the reason that some people don't have any satisfaction is they don't have any thirst. You see, most folks are not thirsty. Most folks are content to stay just as they are. There is not, in most hearts, a divine discontent, a holy heartburn, or a deep thirst.

Oh, I know if I were to ask you tonight, “How many of you want more power in your life? How many of you want more victory in your life? How many of you want to be more mightily used for God?”—I daresay, if I were to ask it that way and ask for a public show of hands—then almost every hand would go up, because we couldn't afford not to put our hand up. Folks would be looking at us, and we'd slip up our hands. But I want to tell you, dear friend, there can be a prayer-meeting request easily uttered and soon forgotten.

But how many people have a burning, blistering thirst for God? I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I don't know how much of God you have, but I'm persuaded that you have just about all of God that you want. The reason we don't have any more of God is because we don't want any more of God. You see, Jesus said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:6) Our problem is we're not hungry; our problem is that we are not thirsty. And a shallow thirst will bring a shallow satisfaction; a deep thirst will bring a deep satisfaction. Jesus predicates it all with a thirst.

My dear friend, it is not your job to persuade God to fill you with the Holy Spirit; it is your job to permit Him to do so by a thirst, a desire. The only people that Jesus turns away are those people who are filled with the stagnant waters of self-love and those who have been drinking at every other fountain and every other thing and are not thirsty for the Lord Jesus. Where are the people who will say, “O my God, I must have you. O my God, I thirst for you”? You know, thirst is a powerful force. Have you ever really been thirsty? I mean, really thirsty—cut off from water for a while? Do you know what a powerful force that is?

¶ I heard about a little girl who asked her mamma in the middle of the night, “Mamma, can I have a drink of water?” Her mother got up and got the little girl a drink of water. About a half an hour later, she said, “Mamma, can I have a drink of water?” Wearily, the mother got up and got her another drink of water. Twenty minutes later: “Mamma, can I have a drink of water?” The Mamma said, “I'm going to get you one

more drink of water, and if I hear from you again, then I'm going to spank you. Do you understand?" Thirty minutes later: "Mamma, when you get up to spank me, would you bring a drink of water?" Thirst is a powerful thing.^f

Now, I want to ask you a question: How much would you pay for a glass of water—just one glass of water? Well, it all depends. I mean, you can turn on the water faucet and get water; and so, probably, you'd say, "Well, I don't know that I would pay anything for a glass of water. Water is free." Well, let me ask you this question: If you were in the middle of the desert—a burning, broiling, blistering desert, where your body is dehydrated, your skin is parched, your tongue is dry, and your lips are cracked—then—you know, without water, you're going to perish—and then, somebody comes to you with a glass of water—ice-cold, clear, crystal, pure water—then, how much would you pay for it? A dollar? Five dollars? Hey, ten dollars? A hundred dollars? A thousand? "Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." (Job 2:4) I daresay that you would give everything you possess—everything—for one glass of water under certain conditions. Isn't that true—everything you possess?

You see, listen, folks: it is not that we can purchase this water of life. We cannot. But I am telling you that there must be that kind of a desire, and there's no *if* or *but* about it—you must have that desire before God will do business with you. *God does business with those that mean business*, and that's the reason that Jesus predicated all of this by this statement: "*If any man thirst...*" (John 7:37)

Now, if you're not thirsty, then why don't you pray that God will make you thirsty? If you're not concerned, then will you at least get concerned that you're not concerned? And if you're not thirsty, then would you at least thirst to be thirsty? Would you at least get alone with God and say, "God, there's something wrong with me. I don't even desire spiritual things. O God, whatever it is, reveal it to me"? You must understand the subjects. Jesus is speaking to thirsty people.

II. You Must Understand the Source

Second thing you must understand: not only must you understand the subjects, but you must also understand the source. For Jesus said, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*" (John 7:37) Now, Jesus is the source of this satisfaction, and when you come to Jesus, there is no way to come to Jesus without coming from self. For Jesus said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.*" (Matthew 16:24) And I want to remind you that denying self is not denying yourself things. Peter forsook his nets a long time before he forsook Peter. Denying self is just basically saying "no" to self and "yes" to the Lord Jesus Christ and coming to Jesus in full and absolute surrender.

Now, it's very important that you understand this, or you'll not be filled with the Holy Spirit, because, dear friend, there are a lot of people who want to be filled with the Spirit,

but they want to be filled with the Spirit for the wrong motivation. There are a lot of preachers who want to be filled with the Spirit, and I'll tell you why: they want to be great preachers. There are a lot of singers that want to be filled with the Spirit because they want to be great singers. A lot of teachers want to be filled with the Spirit because they want to be great teachers. But God is not interested in making you a "great" anything—not in that sense of the word.

You say, "God, fill me, that I might live a pure life," and He'll say, "I'm not interested."

"God, will you fill me, that I might be a soul winner?"

He said, "I'm not concerned about that."

"God, would you fill me, that I might understand the Bible?"

"No, I'm not concerned about that. I won't fill you with the Spirit for any of those reasons."

"God, would you fill me, that I might be a fine pastor?"

"No, sir, I will not do it."

I'm beginning to wonder why God is so stubborn, but then I say, "O God, God, would you fill me, that Jesus Christ might be glorified in my life?"

"Oh, is that what you want? That's what I want, too."

And, God will fill you with the Spirit. And then, He'll make you a Bible student. Then, He'll help you to live clean. Then, He'll help you to preach. Then, He'll help you to teach, and He'll help you to do all of these. But they will never be ends in themselves.

Jim, if you want to have a great music program, then God is not one bit interested. But, if you, through this music program, glorify Jesus, Jesus Christ will be so honored and so glorified God the Holy Spirit will say, "I'm pleased to come into your life and to fill you and to anoint you." The same thing is true in my life and in your life. Whether, my dear friend, you are a homemaker, or whatever you are, whomever you are—businessman or whatever—when you say, "I want my life or death for Jesus to be glorified in my life," then the Holy Spirit of God will fill you. You came to Jesus.

And by the way, dear friend, let me tell you that you do come to Jesus. How to be filled with the Spirit is just to surrender to Jesus. He is the One who pours out the Spirit. Jesus is the One who gives you power as you surrender.

Now, I hear a lot of people give a lot of formulas for being filled with the Holy Spirit, and most of them are based on sort of a "works righteousness." They say, "Now, if you will live right, and if you will pray enough, and if you will do this, then, ipso facto, God will fill you with the Spirit." Hey, friend, that's completely backward. I mean, if I could do all of these things, then I wouldn't need to be filled with the Spirit. Ha! You go to the bank; you want to borrow the money, and if you can prove to the bank you don't need any money, then they will loan you some. Huh? Isn't that right? Now listen, folks, God doesn't say, "If you

can do this, and this, and this, and this, and this, and this, then you'll be qualified to be filled with the Spirit"—oh no. If you don't learn anything else that your pastor says tonight, then I want you to learn this: *holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness*. You just come to Him. He is the way. (John 14:6)

Now, I'm not saying that you can come to Him with your fingers crossed behind your back. I'm not saying that you can come to Him and still cling to your sins. That's not the point. Thou must repent; you must surrender. But if you will do that, then He will take you where you are and make you what you ought to be. Christ is the way to holiness. Jesus said, "*I am the way.*" (John 14:6) There is no way to the way. He is the way. Just get on it. He is the way.

III. You Must Understand the Secret

And so, the subjects are those people who are thirsty. The source is Jesus Christ Himself. You come to Jesus in absolute surrender. And the secret of it—what is the secret of this satisfaction and this overflowing life? Jesus said, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*" (John 7:37)

Now, there comes a time, dear friend, when you must appropriate the blessings of God. I mean, you must drink. Now, what is drinking? It is by faith receiving God's blessing. Jesus equates it in this scripture with believing: "*He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.*" (John 7:38) Do you know what is wrong with so many of us? We are sermon samplers and sermon tasters, but we are not takers, but we are not participates. Now folks, listen, *the Bible is not first and foremost a book to be explained; the Bible is first and foremost a book to be believed*. Okay? Okay? So many of us are wanting the Bible explained to us, but an explanation is not what we need. It is an experience of the truth; it is an appropriation of the truth of God's Word.

¶ Now, let's go back to that glass of water out there in the desert, and let's suppose that a person doesn't charge you anything. Suppose a person comes to your need. You're dying of thirst, and he comes with that big, tall, cool glass of water. There it is—crystal clear. There are the ice cubes inside. There's the beady frost on the outside. Now, let's suppose you look at that, and you say, "Oh, water! My poor soul needs water. I desire water. That is exactly, precisely what I need—water." And he says, "Well, here it is. It is yours." And you say, "Oh, wonderful! Hallelujah! Water! Water! Water! How wonderful is water? Oh, look at those ice cubes! Oh, look at those little beads of frost all over the outside of that glass. My, how clear it is! Well, there must be ten ounces in that glass. Is that real crystal?" And you can talk about it, and eulogize it, and brag on it, and I'm going to say, "Hey, don't you think you better appropriate it? Don't you think you better drink?"¶

Now, you know what the danger is? Some of you will be here and say, “Oh boy, what the pastor preached is what I really need,” but you won’t drink. Somehow you just don’t think God really wants to bless you. Somehow you just don’t think that you can take, and appropriate, and say, “God means what He says and says what He means.” *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”* (John 7:37) Would you be audacious enough to stand on God’s Word and say, “O blessed Spirit of God, O blessed Christ of God, I receive of heaven’s blessings, taken tonight. I appropriate. I believe. I receive. I invite”? You must do that, folks. Have you ever tried to lead a person to faith in Jesus Christ, and they understand the gospel but they just won’t receive Christ? Some folks are that way about the Spirit-filled life. There comes a time when that thirsty soul must, by faith, appropriate that which God has given.

IV. You Must Understand the Supply

Now, watch: understand the subjects—the thirsty ones; understand the source—the Christ of God; understand the secret. There comes a time when you just, by faith, put the hand of faith upon the promise of God, put it to your spiritual lips, and invite the blessings of God. The secret: *“let him...drink.”* (John 7:37) And then, I want you to understand, dear friend, the satisfaction of it—or, understand, if you will, the supply of it. For Jesus said, “If you will do this, then out of your innermost being will flow a river of living water.” (John 7:38) First, you drink; and now, you become a fountain. “Out of you”—“out of your innermost being”—“will flow a river of living water.” (John 7:38) And *“this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.”* (John 7:39) Dear friend, what we are meant to be is not simply a reservoir of blessing but a river of revival—that God’s Spirit is to so flow through our lives.

You see, dear friend, if you become a spring, or if you become a fountain, then it doesn’t matter how big you are or how smart you are. I could fill up the baptistery with a thimble if it’s overflowing, isn’t that right? I mean, if there’s just, coming out of you, a river of living waters, God’s Holy Spirit in you is welling up, and there’s constant power. The Bible calls it *“peace...like a river.”* (Isaiah 66:12) You just can’t dam up a river. If you dam up a river, then it just rises higher and gathers more power. It’s just there. There’s that peace; there’s that overflowing of the Lord Jesus Christ that comes into your life.

Now, let me tell you something: when the Spirit of God begins to work in your life, He does not work in your life primarily to give you a feeling. This is where many people get hung up: they’re looking for some sort of an ecstasy; they’re looking for some sort of an excitement. Now, dear friend, as I read the Bible, the Bible says in Acts 1:8: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.”* (Acts 1:8) God lets this water well up and flow out of you so that it

might be a blessing to thirsty souls round about you. People ought to be able to come to you for a drink. They ought to be able to be blessed and satisfied by your life, as you have an abundant life. You see, a normal Christian is not a Christian who's having his needs met. A normal Christian is a Christian who's meeting the needs of other people.

Are you a normal Christian? I mean, it's not just that you're satisfied; dear friend, you are a river of revival. God's Spirit is welling up in you. God's Spirit is flowing out of you, and you're a blessing, a source of satisfaction, everywhere that you go. I want my life to be that way: I want people to be blessed by my life. I want them to be blessed by your life, also, that we might be that river of revival. And there's that source—that source of supply that never ends. It just keeps on flowing and flowing and flowing. You're to be a spring and not a sponge.

A. Some Christians Are Like Pitcher Pumps

Some of you who were raised in the country had, by your backdoor, an old-fashioned pitcher pump. Do you know what I'm talking about? One of these with the handle on it? Now, I know most of you are so dignified and citified, but if you're old enough, or you lived far enough back in the woods, then you had one of those where you were raised. I'm talking about one you had to prime. Would you lift your hand? I know whom I'm talking to now. All right. Now, one of those old-fashioned pitcher pumps—you remember, you had to prime it. And somebody would leave a quart jar there and a bucket of water, and you'd pour the water in that ol' pump; and it'd be dry. And you'd just have to start pumping like this, and after a while, it'd go *slup sluppppppp*. And then, it would start to flow. And as long as you pumped, the water would come out, right? All right. Now, that's one kind of Christian.

B. Some Christians Are Like Artesian Wells

But there's another kind of Christian who is an artesian well. Now, down in Florida, we have some underground rivers, and they have them other places, I suppose, too. We call them "artesian wells." You don't have to pump that water; you just put down a shaft, and there is, under the ground, a living stream. And there's such pressure there that the water just rises up like a spring, and it flows out.

I've pastored long enough to know that I've got some of my members who are pitcher pumps, and some of them who are artesian wells. Some of them, if you want them to do anything, you have to prime their pump—I mean, you have to chuck them under the chin, and stroke them, and brag on them, and manipulate them, or do something. And after a while, they say, "Well, all right," you know, like they're doing you and God a wild favor. And they will do what you ask them to do—maybe they'll work in the nursery; maybe they'll give toward victory in Jesus; maybe they'll go out soul winning; maybe they'll teach a class. And you say, "Well, I've got that one going." But

then, you walk away to work on somebody else, and you know what happens? *Slupppp*—they lose their prime. You’ve just got to stay there and continually pump.

There are others you don’t have to do that to. You know, there are some folks—they’ll join a Baptist church, and they’ll say, “You know, I’ve been a member of this church for three weeks, and nobody has been out to visit me yet.” Other people join a church one Sunday, and the next Sunday they say, “Is there anybody I can go see?” There’s a difference. Some are sponges, and some are springs. Some want to be served, and some want to serve. Some are pitcher pumps, and some are artesian wells.

Jesus said, “*Out of his [innermost being] shall flow [a river] of living waters.*” (John 7:38) Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we were all rivers of living waters? Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we just all had that supply, where not only were we being blessed, but we are also blessing other people? It is so wonderful, dear friend, when God uses you to be a witness.

Conclusion

† The other day, Phil Weatherwax passed on to me a story—I think it was Phil, but maybe it was you, Ken—passed on to me a story about a man named Roger Sims. Rogers Sims had just gotten out of the army. He had his suitcase, and he was hitchhiking home. It was a hot day. He had his thumb up. He saw a car coming, but his hopes faded because it was a big, shiny, brand-new Cadillac. And he said, “That guy will never stop for me,” but the car stopped. He got in the car—a beautiful car. He just marveled at the dashboard and all of the appointments in that car. They rode along. The man who picked him up was a man named Mr. Hanover. And they talked about sports, they talked about the weather, and they talked the war and all of these things. And Roger Sims was a Christian, and he felt that he needed to witness to Mr. Hanover. But he was embarrassed. He said, “This man, as important as he is (a big businessman)—he won’t let me witness to him.” But the Holy Spirit of God, this river in him, just would not be quiet; it just kept welling up and welling up and welling up. And so, finally, Roger just prayed for courage, and he said, “O God, help me. Give me courage.”

And he said, “Mr. Hanover, may I talk to you for just a few moments?” He said, “Sir, I want to talk to you about your soul. Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?” And Mr. Hanover, with those steel grey eyes, looked into the dark eyes of Roger Sims and pulled the car over to the curb. Roger thought he was going to put him out: “He’s angry with me.” But he bowed his head on the steering wheel and said, “Tell me about Him. I need to know God.” And he wept his way to Jesus Christ. They rejoiced as they drove on toward Chicago. And this man, Mr. Hanover, took Roger right to his door. He got out and went in and had a wonderful meal with his parents.

Then, he saw his girlfriend, and after a while, Roger and his girlfriend were married.

And in a couple of years, they had some wonderful children. And about five years passed, and Roger now had a business of his own. He realized he had to go to Chicago, where Mr. Hanover had his business. Mr. Hanover had given to Roger a white card and said, “If you are ever in Chicago, come and see me.” It was a business card. When Roger was getting his socks out, he found that business card, and he said, “Well, I think I’ll go by and see Mr. Hanover.” And he took that card and went to that very prestigious office—this big industry, Hanover Industries, there in Chicago. He went into the office, and he said, “I’m Roger Sims. Mr. Hanover asked me to come in and see him if I were ever in Chicago. May I see him please?” The secretary looked strange and said, “No, you cannot see him.” He said, “Well, I believe he’d want to see me. He would remember me.” She said, “I’m sorry. Perhaps you better talk to his wife.”

And after a while, Roger Sims found himself talking with Mrs. Hanover. She looked at him quizzically and said, “How do you know my husband?” “Well,” he said, “I was hitchhiking, and he picked me up and we talked.” She looked intently at him and said, “Would you tell me what you talked about?” Roger felt intimidated at first; and then, the Holy Spirit said, “Go ahead and tell her.” He said, “We talked about spiritual things.” She said, “What kind of spiritual things? Tell me.” “Well,” he said, “I told him about Jesus Christ. I told him how to be saved.” And she said, “Please tell me what happened then.” “Well,” he said, “to tell you the truth, he bowed his head with tears and gave his heart to Jesus Christ.” At that moment, she began to weep with sobs almost uncontrollable. Convulsed in sobs, she wept. He said, “I don’t understand.” She said, “Well, let me tell you something: my husband never came home from that trip. After he put you out, he was in a horrible accident that took his life. And I had been praying for his salvation, and God had promised me that He would save my husband. And for five years, I’ve been angry with God because He had not heard my prayer.”^f

Friend, I tell you, we need more people like Roger Sims, who are a river of revival—who will say, “O God, when you speak, I will speak; and when you impress me, Lord, I will be your witness. I’ll be your testimony, and I’ll share the love of Jesus. And I want out of my life to be a river of revival, blessing the hearts and lives of other people.”

Let’s bow our heads together in prayer.^f

The Soul's Fountain of Youth

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 28, 1991

Main Scripture Text: John 7:37–39

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” John 7:38

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Well, I tell you, there's one thing the devil cannot stand, and that's the Word of God—and not just the bound Word of God, but I mean the applied Word of God. Very frankly, the devil is not afraid of a Bible; he's afraid of the truth of the Bible applied in human hearts and human lives. Take that Bible and turn it to John chapter 7, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 37. I want to talk to you tonight about “The Soul's Fountain of Youth.” There's a way, dear friend, that no matter what age you are, in Jesus, you can be perpetually young, perpetually growing and gaining strength. John 7, verse 37: *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly”—that is, “out of his innermost being”—“shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”* (John 7:37–39)

Now, let me give you the background for this passage of Scripture. Every year, in Jerusalem, they would have a feast called the Feast of the Tabernacles, and it was the high point of all of the feasts, the feast days, of ancient Israel. And the climactic day of that feast, the last day of the feast, was the most wonderful of all. They would go to the

Pool of Siloam, and the high priest would fill a pitcher with water—a silver pitcher or a golden pitcher—with water. And then he would bring it out and pour it out at the altar, and the people would say with joy, “*Shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*” (Isaiah 12:3) And there would be jubilation, and there would be ecstasy, and there would be joy, and there would be shouting, and there would be dancing, and there would be rejoicing. It was the last day, the great day, the climactic day of the feast. Standing there somewhere was Jesus, and Jesus was watching all of it. It was all a picture and a prophecy of Jesus Christ Himself; but they didn’t know it. It was all about Him; but they were missing it all. He was that water of salvation. He is that well of joy. But they didn’t understand it. And His great heart was so moved He could stay silent no longer.

Now, normally, Jesus did not lift His voice; but here the Bible says He virtually shouted. The Bible says He cried; that is, He is lifted up His voice. Everybody is there listening. Right in the middle of the ceremony He stands and He shouts, “If anybody thirsts, let him come to me and drink!” Right in the middle of the ceremony, Jesus did that. Why? He knew that all of this was vain ceremony. He knew that these people had religion but they did not have reality. And I’ll tell you, dear friend, *it will be a great day in America when people stop enduring religion and start enjoying salvation*, won’t it? They had religion without reality. And Jesus knew that this same crowd that was leaping and dancing and exalting, He knew that soon they would go back to their homes; the ceremony would be over, and they’d go back to their same old faults, their same old fears, their same old foibles, their same old failures, their same old frustrations. He knew that, and His heart was just moved because He wanted them to enjoy the Spirit-filled life. For the Bible said, “*This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*”

Well, the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Jesus knew that when a person would come to Him and trust Him after His glorification, they would receive the dear Holy Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God would come into these thirsty people and give them true satisfaction.

And, tonight, if you’re thirsty, I’ve got wonderful news for you. I have for you tonight the secret of satisfaction. I have for you tonight the soul’s fountain of youth. But here our Lord is talking about salvation. But He’s talking about more than salvation; He’s talking about more than simply being saved; He is talking about the Spirit-filled life—not only a life that has come to our Lord for satisfaction, but a life also that is so full that it is overflowing with blessings. Out of one’s innermost being will flow a river of revival. That’s what He’s talking about. And that’s what I desire for my deacons tonight. That’s what I desire for this staff tonight. That’s what I desire for our Sunday School teachers.

Yea, that's what I long for and pray for in my own life and for every mother's child in this building: that we would learn something of the sweet ministry of God's dear, precious, wonderful Holy Spirit that Jesus was so excited about that He could not be still. He literally shouted, "Oh, if anyone thirsts, let him come unto me and drink!"

And I say, dear friend, He's talking about salvation, but more than salvation. Many of us have been saved. And I asked you tonight when you were saved just simply to get you to thinking about it. You know what I was really doing? I was getting some folks to wonder, "Have I been saved at all?" That's what I was doing. I mean, I was just saying, "Now, well, I wasn't saved on a Sunday; but when was I saved? Have I been saved?" That's what I wanted you to think about. And if you're not saved, I want you to be saved. How wonderful it is to be saved!

But, you know, so many of our people who are saved still don't understand the Spirit-filled life. Somehow they've bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost. I mean, they have been to Calvary for pardon, but they haven't been to the Pentecost for power. They're like Lazarus was when Lazarus came out of that grave: He had life, but he didn't have liberty. He was bound, and Jesus said, "*Loose him, and let him go.*" (John 11:44) Oh, my dear friend, I want the Lord that gave you life to give you liberty, and the Lord that gave you pardon to give you power, and help you to understand the wonderful, wonderful, wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit of God.

You know, people today are trying to say, "Where's the answer?"

A. Some People Think the Answer Is Intellectualism

And there's the person who thinks the answer is intellectual. He puts the great emphasis on Bible study: "Study, study, study, study!" And we've got people, they have got notebooks *that* thick full of facts, but they don't have any power. And when their head's fuller, their heart seems to be emptier. And they trudge from Bible study class to Bible study class. And some people just think that the answer is intellectual. And I'm not against study; but, dear friend, you need the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Some People Think the Answer Is Activity

Other people think that the answer is activity. You know, we've got the activists. There are plenty of those. Baptists are great among those. You know: "A busy Christian is a happy Christian. Go to work." And, you know, somebody said, "If Baptists had a patron saint, he'd be Saint Vitus." We're busy. I mean, we're always at it. But these people are just so tired, and they are trying harder to do better. And they found out that activity is not the answer.

C. Some People Think the Answer Is Emotionalism

Then there are some people who think that emotionalism is the answer. Have you ever been in a service where somebody is trying to whip up the emotionalism? I'm not against emotions. I'm happy tonight, and I got blessed when that choir was singing "Standing on the Solid Rock." And I love to be here. And I love to laugh. And I love to enjoy the Lord Jesus. And I'm not ashamed to shed a tear. But, my dear friend, emotionalism is not the answer. *Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part.*

There's nothing wrong with the emotion—don't misunderstand me. But there are people who are trying to find the answer to satisfaction, and so they get in a service, and everybody tries to get them emotional, you know. And they get all worked up, you know. And, finally, they say they have some ecstatic experience. "Oh," they say, "I've got it! I've got it! I've got it!" They're so happy. But the next morning they wake up with a migraine; or they go to work, and the boss chews them out; they get in a traffic jam, and that highway becomes the world's longest parking lot; and it's all gone. And all they have is the memory of an emotional experience. It's not the answer.

D. Some People Think the Answer Is Legalism

Somebody else says, "Well, the answer is in legalism. We've got to be clean and pure." And so they say, "Don't do this, and don't do that. And don't do this; don't do that. And quit this, and don't go there. And don't taste that, and don't look at this." And maybe everything that they deny is something that needs to be denied; but, my dear friend, if that's all that happens to them, do you know what they will become? A bitter, hard Pharisee. And while they prune their limbs, they merely strengthen their root. And it's all—external. I mean, there is no substitute—there is no substitute—for this river of revival, the Holy Spirit of God, that Jesus Christ is talking about tonight.

Now, if you want to learn this secret, and if you want to enjoy this blessing, it is simply glorious; it is gloriously simple. Jesus was the master teacher. You know, every now and then people will hear a teacher, a preacher, and he will use double-jointed, polysyllabic, sesquipedalian terms. And he will stand up there and elucidate. He goes down deep, and stays down long, and comes up dry. And somebody says, "Boy, he must be brilliant! I didn't understand him." Don't kid yourself. Just because a river is muddy doesn't mean it's deep.

The Bible says of Jesus Christ that *"the common people heard him gladly."* (Mark 12:37) Jesus was such a teacher they said, *"Never man spake like this man."* (John 7:46) Oh, He could confuse the high muckety-mucks, the lawyers, and all of the rest of

them who would come and try and trap Him. They'd ask Him a question, and He'd ask them a question that would knock them dead. They came to Him with a dishonest question. They never put our Lord in the corner. But everyone who wanted to know, He taught. The Bible says He hides these things from the wise and the prudent, and He reveals them to babes. (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21) Isn't that wonderful? Isn't the way that Jesus taught wonderful? Boys and girls would come to Him. Fishermen could learn and become apostles. How wonderful was the teaching of Jesus! How clear yet how profound was the teaching of Jesus! What a wonderful Savior we have!

And so, Jesus, wanting them to understand, and Jesus, wanting them to have a reality and not just religion, He stood up, and He said, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"* and *"out of his [innermost being]"—"out of his belly"—"shall flow rivers of living water."* Four basic things to write down. You want the power of the Holy Spirit—the satisfaction and the supply?

I. You Must Thirst

First of all, my dear friend, you must thirst—you must thirst. I mean, that is the requirement. Are you thirsty? Do you know the reason that many people are not Spirit-filled? They are satisfied with themselves. They don't need anything else. I mean, they think they're fine. They really are not, but they think they are.

I heard about one preacher in a country church who asked his deacon to dismiss in prayer. And the old deacon stood up and prayed. And in the midst of the prayer, he said, *"And, Lord, unctonize our pastor."* Well, the pastor let it pass. But then he prayed it again; and he prayed it the third time—the same prayer. It rankled the old preacher. And he met the deacon at the door, and he said, *"Now, deacon,"* he said, *"when you prayed,"* he said, *"you prayed three times to 'unctonize our pastor.'"* He said, *"I want to get something straight: What does that word unctonize mean?"* The old deacon said, *"Rev,"* he said, *"I really don't know what it do mean, but whatever it means, you ain't got it."*

And I want to tell you, folks, there are a lot of people who don't have uncton, and they really don't care. I mean, they are content just like they are. They are not thirsty, and the reason that they're not thirsty is that they are filled with the stagnant waters of carnality and self-love.

Now Jesus didn't say, *"If you're empty, come unto me and drink."* Jesus said, *"If you are thirsty, come to me and drink."* (John 7:37) *The gasoline tank in my automobile has been empty many times, but it's never once been thirsty.* There are a lot of empty people who are satisfied to stay empty. Very frankly, folks, a lot of folks are not Spirit-filled because they really have no real desire. Jesus said, *"Blessed are they which do*

hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)

If I were to ask tonight how many thirsty people we have, how many people in this congregation, how many of the staff, how many of the choir, how many on the platform, how many out there are thirsty for more of God, I daresay that most of the folks here would raise your hand, because it would be the proper thing to do. But no sooner than the sound of the preacher’s voice died out in your ears, you would have forgotten what you ever thought about. You don’t seek God. You’re not thirsting for God. You see—listen—have you ever really been thirsty—I mean, really, really thirsty? Most of us don’t even know what thirst is with a water spigot everywhere, soft drinks everywhere, refreshment—most of the time, ice water fountains—here in America. Have you ever really been thirsty?

I preached out in Arizona one time. Dr. Vaughn Rock, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Phoenix, Arizona, told me a story. He said, “Adrian, we had a young man in our church who had an airplane. And he and some friends were flying out over this Arizona desert, and the plane went down. And they lived out there in that desert for one day, another day, another day. They did everything that they could do to satisfy their thirst. Finally, every available bit of moisture was left. Finally, when they came and found those shriveled, withered bodies of those men who had died in thirst, one of the young men”—who was a member of Dr. Rock’s church—“said, ‘Pastor, we’re dying; we’re dying of thirst. It is terrible.’ He said, ‘Pastor, when they find us, I want you to preach my funeral.’ And he said, ‘But I have one request: Before they close the casket,’ he said, ‘I want you to pour a glass of water on my body.’” That was the man’s dying request. Thirsty! Thirsty!

You see, it’s not your job to persuade God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we act like God is the tyrant and we are the heroes: “If we could only persuade God to give us what we need...” Oh, no. You don’t persuade God to fill you; you permit God to fill you. God longs to fill you. God wants to fill you. But the only thing that God cannot fill is that which is already full. And we’re so full of self, so full of pride, so full of our self-satisfaction and the stagnant waters of carnality that we’re not thirsty. Our Lord never turns away a person who is truly, truly thirsty. And if you’re not thirsty tonight, maybe you ought to pray that God will make you thirsty. Maybe you ought to just simply say, “God, I’m thirsty to be thirsty. I’m hungry to be hungry. I’m in need to be needy. And, O God, I care that I don’t care. Start with me somewhere, dear God. O God, I’m just tired of going on Sunday after Sunday and year after year this same way.”

If you were that young man in that airplane wreck, and somebody came to you with a glass of water, how much would you pay for that glass of water? Would you give a dollar for a glass of nothing but water? Would you give ten dollars for a glass of nothing

but just water? Would you give a hundred dollars? Friend, you would give ten thousand dollars or more. “*Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*” (Job 2:4) You would pay any price for one glass of water—if that’s the only way you could get it.

Now I’m not trying to say that you can buy the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I’m just trying to tell you, my dear friend, that God does business with those that mean business; and most of us really don’t mean business. I daresay that most of the people in this congregation tonight—even some who are leaders of this church—are quite satisfied where you are, and therefore you’ll never have any more. Now the subjects, the people, that Jesus Christ is talking to tonight are those who are thirsty. All of this thing is predicated with an *if*: “If any man thirst”—if, if, if, if—“*let him come unto me, and drink.*” (John 7:37)

II. You Must Come

All right, number one: Thirst. Number two: Come—come. “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me.*” (John 7:37) Just come to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the One who sends the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the One who baptizes you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He baptized the infant church with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. And then Jesus Christ is the One who sends His sweet Spirit into your heart. You see, I mentioned this in my mind—maybe it was Wednesday night. I hope you pay more attention when I preach than I do. But it was some time not long ago when I told you this: that holiness *is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness.*

Now, don’t get the idea that you work your way to Jesus. That’s the biggest fallacy. It’s all a works righteousness. Don’t get the idea that you work to Jesus. You do not work your way to Jesus; you work from Jesus. You just come to Jesus. He is the way. (John 14:6). There’s no way to the way. He is the way. Get on it. If you’re thirsty, come!

You say, “I’m sinful.” Then come to Jesus. You say, “I’m weak.” Come to Jesus. You say, “I have doubts.” Come to Jesus. You say, “I don’t understand.” Come to Jesus. Just come to Him. Come to Him—come to Him. “*If any man thirst*”—He says—“*let him come unto me.*” And, oh, thank God, He just invites you. You don’t have to beg Him. You don’t have to persuade Him. You don’t have to get qualified. You can’t get qualified. You just come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Come.

III. You Must Drink

Thirsty. Coming. And what’s next? Drinking. Didn’t I tell you it was simple? “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*”—“*drink.*” (John 7:37) Drink into Jesus. Just appropriate the Lord Jesus. Now the reason He did this, again, as the master teacher, He’s so easy to understand; everybody understands what thirst is; everyone

understands what coming to someone is; and everyone understands what drinking is—I mean, we all know what it is to imbibe fluid into our bodies—and so He uses that as an illustration and a picture of drinking into the Holy Spirit of God. You just simply drink.

“Well,” you say, “how do I drink?” By faith. He illustrates it: “As the scripture saith, He that believeth on me...” (John 7:38) So, what is the counterpart of drinking? Believing. Believing is the drinking of the Spirit. You drink of the Lord Jesus just simply by believing in Him. That’s the way you receive. That’s the way you appropriate the Lord Jesus. It’s an act of faith, just like salvation.

Now it’s one thing for you to hear about Jesus and hear the Lord Jesus preached. And I preach Jesus every Sunday. And I tell people to trust Jesus every Sunday. And I give an invitation every Sunday; and some people hear the message, but they don’t all receive Christ. But, thank God, some do. But it’s only those who receive Christ as Savior and Lord who are saved: not those who hear; not those who even want to be saved; but those who act upon it, and those who receive the Lord Jesus. And so it is with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You see, you come to Jesus, and you drink of Jesus not only for pardon, but for power: to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And you do it by faith, just exactly as you trusted Jesus. “As ye believed on the Lord Jesus, so ye walk ye in Him.” (Colossians 2:6)

Now, this is where many of us fail: right at this point. We think, “I dare not do that. I mean, I don’t have any right to do that.” Oh, yes, you do have a right. I mean, you can claim and appropriate the promises of God.

When Joyce would prepare food for our children when they were little, she didn’t say, “Now, children, the dinner is ready, and the table is set. Get down there on the floor, and beg and plead and scream and cry, and maybe I’ll let you eat and drink.” She wouldn’t say that. She’d just said, “Come, dears. Dinner is ready.” We’d sit down, and thank God, and eat. And, friend, listen. You have every right—every throne right, as a child of God—to come to Jesus tonight and drink of that blessed Holy Spirit of God, to appropriate the life of Jesus, the fullness of Jesus, by believing. You see, it’s your right.

If you had a thousand dollars in the bank—and I hope some do—if you had a thousand dollars in the bank, and you needed some money, and you took a check, and wrote a check—let’s say for fifty dollars—and walked down to the bank where you have a thousand dollars, and wrote that check, you wouldn’t have to beg the teller to give you any money. You wouldn’t say, “Now, here’s a check. Please—pretty please with sugar on it—would you let me have fifty dollars?” You wouldn’t have to do that. Friend, that’s your authority. You have a right. That’s your money. You’re just presenting a check. You see, Jesus says you can come and drink. You can do it.

Now, you know what’s wrong with a lot of folks here tonight? They’ll say, “Now, you

know, pastor, that was a good message. Boy, you know, you were really talking right down my line. That's exactly what I need. That is really what I need. That was a good message, pastor. Yes sir, you were really plowing close to the corn. Yes sir, preacher, yeah—yep, yep, yep, yep, yep—that's what I need." But that's as far as you ever get. You never drink—you never drink.

I mean, let's go back to that man and that airplane wreck out there in the Arizona desert. Suppose I did come, and I had that big, tall glass of water. And I mean, dear friend, it is there, and it doesn't cost one dollar, ten dollars, twenty dollars, twenty thousand dollars. It cost the Son of God the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. But for you it is absolutely free. And there it is! And I present it to you, and you say, "Oh, boy! Water. Oh, wonderful! Water! Look at that! What a big glassful! Oh, look at those frosty beads on the outside! Look at those ice cubes so clear! Oh, look at that water! Yes sir, that's what I need! Boy, that's what everybody needs! I mean, that's what the world needs! I mean, everybody in the desert needs water! Man, where did you get that water? Well, that's incredible water—yes sir! Boy, I'm really glad you told me about that water!" Not if he's out there on the desert, he's not going to be talking that way. He's going to take it and drink it, isn't he?

If you'll just get this out of your head and out of your notebook and into your life... Sir, I am telling you, you must by an act of faith appropriate what Jesus Christ has for you. You come and drink—you come and drink. I mean, don't just simply fantasize, and philosophize, and be tantalized; but come and drink. *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."*

IV. You Must Overflow

Fourth step—I told you it was simple: Thirst. Come. Drink. And then, overflow. *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...as the scripture [says], out of his [innermost being will] flow [a river] of living water...this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."* (John 7:37–39) You see, do you want me to tell you what a normal Christian is? A normal Christian is somebody who not only is having his spiritual needs met but is meeting the spiritual needs of other people. That's what a normal Christian is. I mean, not just a person who says, "Well, I want satisfaction tonight"; not just a person who says, "I want my spiritual thirst to be sated," but this is a person whose life is a river of revival. Do you know any people like that? Do you know anybody, when you're just around them, they're refreshing? I mean, God is coming out of those people.

You say, "Well, I'm not gifted. I don't have a lot of ability." You don't have to have. **You see that baptistry up there? Do you know what I can fill that baptistry with? A**

thimble—if it overflows, if it just keeps overflowing, just a thimble. I can put a thimble up there, and if that thimble just keeps overflowing, it will fill that baptistry and run it over. You don't have to be big. You don't have to be great. You don't have to be intelligent. You don't have to be a high muckety-muck. Oh, friend, let the life of Jesus Christ flow out of you.

Many of us are looking for buckets of blessings, but God wants us to be rivers of revival. See, a river comes from a higher source. Every river starts from a higher source. You can't stop a river; you just can't do it unless you stop it at the source. You build a dam: it just rises higher and spreads all over. Friend, you can throw rocks at it, but it just keeps on going; it just keeps on flowing. The only way you can stop a river is to stop it at its source. And, friend, the source is Jesus. You'll never stop that river.

Conclusion

Why don't you just come to Him tonight and say, "I'm tired of living this life I've been living; I'm thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years of age; before long, this earthly journey will be over; it's about time that I stopped enduring religion; it's about time that I understood the supernatural life, because I'm tired of being superficial; I want to be supernatural; I'm tired of being a sponge, soaking up and only giving out when I'm squeezed; I want to be a river of revival; I want to have my needs met, and I want to be a blessing to my children, to those I work with, to my Sunday School class, to my neighbors"? Question: Are you thirsty?

Casting the First Stone

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 03, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 8:1–11

“But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

JOHN 8:6–7

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- I. Their Ruthless Accusation
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bible and turn tonight, if you would, to the Gospel of John, chapter 8. We’re going to look at a passage of scripture tonight that, very frankly, is often quoted but very seldom preached from. It’s the story of a woman taken in adultery. And, she was to be stoned, according to some, and Jesus forgave her.

Now, we, as a nation, are going through this moment, this very time in history—a very, very, very grave and serious time. The President of the United States, the man who is reputed to be the most powerful man, politically, upon the face of the earth—I

don't think he is the most powerful man; I believe that a prophet of God is more powerful than a president—but the most powerful man, politically, on the face of the earth is facing an adjudication in the Senate of the United States of America that could possibly rebound in his removal from office, though many people think that will not happen. They don't think there will be enough votes for this to happen in the Senate. I don't know whether there will be or not, and I'm not going to venture an opinion on that. But I, like you, have been listening to talk shows. I have been listening to conversations. I have received some mail and some other things. And, there are two scriptures that are being quoted today—floated and quoted—more than they ever have in my lifetime. One is *“Judge not, that [you] be not judged”* (Matthew 7:1). Now, very frankly, it's almost amusing that people who would have nothing to do with the Bible heretofore love to quote it. And, the other is, *“Let him that is without sin cast the first stone”* (John 8:7). And, we're hearing those scriptures over and over again.

Well, let's look at the situation that deals with casting stones—John chapter 8. And, by the way, let me say, if you have a more modern translation or edition of the Bible, you may find some footnotes here, because this story is not found in some of the older manuscripts, though I believe it is a part of the inspired Word of God. Listen to it:

“Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and [the] Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned”—and, boys and girls, that literally means “to cast stones at an individual until they die.” It was a form of capital punishment that was practiced by the Jews in the time of Moses. And so—“Moses...commanded us, that such should be stoned”—that is, “a person—man or a woman—taken in adultery—“but what sayest thou?”—that is, “Jesus, what do you say about this?” Now, notice verse 6—“This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, he saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are...thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:1–11).

Now, I want you to get the scene. Here are some angry men. They are dressed in

long, flowing robes with wide borders. They have their religious paraphernalia on them. They have their phylacteries bound on them, and they are dragging a woman with them into the temple to throw her down before Jesus. Now, of course, we were not there, but we can imagine the scene. Her hair is disheveled; her garments are torn. Perhaps on her face there is a sullen and defiant look. Maybe there's a look of rebellion. But doubtless, there's also much fear in this woman.

Now, to the men who came dragging this woman, she did not matter at all. She was not important to them. She was nothing to them. She was simply a pawn in their game. The game that they were playing was simply this: get Jesus; catch Jesus; discredit Jesus. It was a "get Jesus" committee. The woman was incidental. They could not have cared less about her, but they had a scheme. And, here was their scheme: they wanted to put Jesus Christ on the horns of a dilemma; they wanted to put Him between two choices. Either one of them would have been wrong in some way, they thought. They said, "Moses said she ought to be stoned. What do You say?"

Now, if Jesus said, "Release her and let her go," they would have said, "Look, everybody—He claims to be a religious teacher, but He doesn't obey the law of Moses." Now, if He said, "Stone her," number one, He would have been a lawbreaker, because the Roman law did not allow the Jews to stone—the Roman law did not allow the Jews to practice capital punishment. That's the reason they could not put Jesus Christ to death. They had to get Pilate to agree to it. Now, it is true that sometimes they did stone people, like they stoned Stephen, but they did that as outlaws. And, when they did that as outlaws, they never preached it—they never bragged about it. It was not a practice that anyone would dare have flung in the face of Rome. And so, they were trying to put Jesus on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand, to be against Moses; or, on the other hand, to be a lawbreaker. And also, if He had said, "Stone her," they said, "Some friend of sinners He is." And so, they can hardly restrain their glee. They think now they have Jesus between the rock and the hard place. And so, they're standing there with their long ecclesiastical robes, smirking at Jesus. Now, having said that, I want you to notice with me tonight three things.

I. Their Ruthless Accusation

First of all, I want you to notice their ruthless accusation. Look at it in verse 3: "*And the scribes and [the] Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery*" (John 8:3). It doesn't say that they said she was taken in adultery. She was guilty. The Bible says, "*She was taken in adultery*" (John 8:3). Now, notice—they didn't bring the man. It takes two to commit adultery. But, they just came, dragging this woman, and they took her. Evidently, they had found her—or, someone else had found her—and reported her, and they set her in the midst.

Now, they make this ruthless accusation, and *“they [said] unto him”*—verse 4—*“this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act”* (John 8:4). Now, I say it was ruthless because of the motive that they had. They’re not looking for justice. They’re really not upset about adultery. The Bible makes it very clear what their motive was: their motive was to get Jesus. Verse 6: *“This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him”* (John 8:6). They were not interested in accusing this woman; they were interested, really, in accusing Jesus.

Now, there are some people who read this story, and they think that, after they read this story, that Jesus might have been light or Jesus might have been cavalier or lax concerning adultery. Oh, no—if you know the Bible, you know that Jesus certainly was not lax, light, cavalier about the sin of adultery. As a matter of fact, Jesus went beyond what Moses said. And, you just put in your margin what Jesus said about adultery in Matthew chapter 5, beginning in verse 28: *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”* (Matthew 5:28). And, by the way, that ought to deal with what some of the men and women in this congregation are watching. You ought to get that filth out of your house, out of your television, and get Hell’s Box Office out of your home and be done with putting all that evil and that vileness in front of your face.

You say, “Well Preacher, I look at these undressed women. I look at people committing acts of immorality on the screen. It doesn’t affect me.” Well, if you’re a man and you say that, you’d better go see your doctor. Either you’re no man, Superman, or you’re a liar. The Bible says, *“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and . . . be [not] burned?”* (Proverbs 6:27). Jesus said, *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”*—and, Jesus said—*“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”* (Matthew 5:28–30). Friend, what Jesus is saying—*it would be better to go limping into Heaven than to go skipping into Hell*. I’m not saying that you’re going to get to Heaven by taking out your eye or cutting off your hand, but what Jesus is talking about is the seriousness of this matter of adultery. Don’t you ever think for a moment that Jesus, in this episode, was in any way—in any way—countenancing the sin of adultery! The Bible is very clear. Jesus was a Bible-believer.

Now, one of the things that I believe is the most disconcerting of everything that is happening in America today—and I’ve heard it time, and time, and time again: “It’s only about sex.” Have you heard that? “It is only about sex,” as if that is some little, insignificant peccadillo. What has happened in America is this: we have gone from

authority to relativism. We pick, today, and choose our morals as if we were in a cafeteria line. And, we have moved from truth to pragmatism: whatever works is right. And, religion today is supposed to produce health, and wealth, and happiness, and it's all man-centered. And, we've gone from reason to feeling. And, physiology has been substituted for theology. And, sin is no longer the great enemy, but sadness is. To feel good in America is the number one priority, not to be holy. And, we've gone from convictions to opinions: few believe anything today except their right to their own happiness.

A. The Fourfold Strategy of Hollywood

And, what is happening is our children—and many adults—have been systematically seduced by the dirty-minded people of Hollywood. Hollywood has done more. Well, I'm going...I'm going to get off. Let me just stay right here; let me say this much: they say the movie producers and the television people—that what they are doing is only holding up a mirror to society. May I tell you that is a sophisticated lie? They are projecting their own moral sickness, and they have a four-fold strategy.

1. They Want to Normalize That Which Is Abnormal or Subnormal

Number one: They want to normalize that which is abnormal or subnormal. They picture unwed people cohabitating and make it as normal as shaking hands or sharing a meal. Profanity and filth in America today are looked upon as polite conversation.

2. They Have Desensitized a Generation

As a result, secondly, they have desensitized a generation. We have a generation today that is desensitized. And, what used to shock us—or even amaze us—now amuses us and entertains us. As a society, we have forgotten how to blush and we've forgotten how to flinch. And then, having desensitized us to what is already wrong, then these Hollywood moguls and purveyors of filth go into the moral jungle to push back the frontiers for even greater depravity. The reason they do this is to keep the audience coming back.

3. They Have Legitimized the Illegitimate

And then, they have legitimized the illegitimate. That which, in simple terms, used to be wrong is no longer wrong. Perversion—sexual perversion—has gone from sin to sickness to a socially accepted practice in today's world. And, we look at the destruction of unborn babies. We call that now choice, and who could be opposed to choice? To bear children out of wedlock is freely accepted in the Hollywood mentality—and in our very city today. And, nobody thinks anything about it.

4. They Have Stigmatized the Good and the Godly

But, Hollywood is not finished yet. Having normalized sin, having desensitized society, having legitimized that which is wrong, they have now stigmatized—listen to me—they

have now stigmatized the good, and the decent, and the godly. Now, if you stand up today for what is right, you are wrong. The only sin today is to call sin *sin*. The word *virgin* is almost a dirty word. Monogamous marriage is a laughable idea. And, those who stand up for righteousness and what is right are today called the *radical Right* for saying that sin is sin, that wrong is wrong. To stand up for decency and morality in today's society is to make you a threat to society. That's where we are, ladies and gentlemen. And, the Bible seemed to anticipate that time. In Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20, where God says, "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isaiah 5:20).

B. Jesus Was Not Minimizing the Sin of Adultery

Now, I want to say that Jesus was not minimizing the sin of adultery. And, don't you ever, ever, ever, ever, ever say, "It's only about sex." You see, the family—the family—is the core of society. And, people who treat sex lightly will treat people lightly, and society has lost its cohesion when we say it's only about sex.

5. Adultery Is a Sin Against One's Self

Adultery is a sin against one's self. First Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 18: the Bible says, "*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body*" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

6. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Home

The Bible teaches that adultery is a sin against the home. The lives of innocent children are being torn apart, and shame is brought upon the home.

7. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Church

Adultery is a sin against the Church. The Bible teaches that we're "*members one of another*" (Romans 12:5). We're in this together. We are the temple of God. "*If any man defile the temple of God, him [will] God destroy*" (1 Corinthians 3:17). If you are an adulterer and a member of this church, you are doing grave damage to the Body of Jesus Christ.

8. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Nation

Adultery is a sin against the nation. Adultery is an act of treason. Deuteronomy chapter 22, verse 22: "*If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman*"—now, listen to this—"*so shalt thou put away evil from Israel*" (Deuteronomy 22:22). God said, "Get it out of the nation! Put away evil from Israel." In the Old Testament economy, when there was a theocracy where there was no king, but God was king, the sin of adultery warranted the death penalty. Now, if you don't like that, don't come argue with me. Take it up with God, okay? I'm giving you the scripture. I'll give it to you again if you didn't hear it—Deuteronomy 22, verse 22 (Deuteronomy 22:22).

9. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Lord

Now, adultery is not only a sin against one's self, against the home, against the church, against the nation, it is a sin against the Lord. When another national leader committed this sin, he recognized that. His name was David. He said in Psalm 51, verse 4, to Almighty God, *"Against thee, [and] thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"* (Psalm 51:4). You see, this sin shows a contempt and a disrespect for the Almighty, and the Bible clearly warns in Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 4, where it says, *"Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but [adulterers] and [whoremongers] God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4). That's what the Bible says. In the Old Testament, the death penalty was required for the sin of adultery. In the Roman occupation, the death penalty was no longer allowed. But, do not think for a moment that Jesus ever, ever, ever looked askance, lightly, upon the sin of adultery.

As a matter of fact, Jesus said, "If you have a lustful eye, if you have a heart full of adultery, just by lust, you are in danger of hellfire." (Matthew 5:27–29) That's what Jesus said. People talk about Jesus being so loving. He was loving, but Jesus Christ had more to say about Hell than any other preacher in the Bible. Never criticize a preacher; never look down upon a preacher when that preacher warns about Hell. Never, somehow, scathingly put a preacher down by calling him a *hellfire preacher*, because friend, whether you know it or not, you're talking about Jesus Christ. Christ had more to say about hellfire than any other person in all of the Bible. So, when you criticize that, as many are wont to do, as a hellfire and brimstone preacher, what they're really doing is talking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, what do we have, first of all, here, as we look at this passage of scripture? What we have is a ruthless accusation. Now, I say it was ruthless because these people were not looking for justice. They cared not for this woman. They were not concerned at all about purity. What they were up to was "Get Jesus! Put Jesus on the horns of a dilemma." The Bible makes it very clear in verse 6: *"This they said, tempting him"* (John 8:6).

II. The Revealing Confrontation

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see—not only a ruthless accusation, but I want you to see a revealing confrontation. Friend, it's not very smart to get in a contest with the Lord Jesus. And, notice now, beginning in verse 4, and see what happened: *"[And] they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?"*—now, they want to confront Jesus—*"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. [And] so when they continued asking him, he*

lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:4–7).

Now, rather than examining the woman, the accusee, He examined the accuser. He examines these people. Now, the Bible records that Jesus stooped down, and He wrote in the dust with His finger. What did He write? None of us know, because the Bible does not tell us what He knows what He wrote. But, I think that we can assume that He wrote something that brought them under serious conviction. What did Jesus write that put these rock-holders out of business? Well, the word for *write* here is a word that is used to write down an accusation. It’s used in other ways, but it can be used to write down an accusation, like an indictment against someone. And, it is obvious from what happened that in spite of their long robes with their broad rims and in spite of their pious prayers, they had hearts that were full of rottenness.

Now, our Lord is not saying that we’re not the judge, and the Lord is not saying that sin is not to be punished. But, what He did say is, “Let him who is without sin first cast a stone” (John 8:7). Jesus is not saying she should not be judged, and Jesus is not saying that people can only judge if they have never, ever sinned. Jesus did not say, “Let him who has never sinned cast the first stone.” Pay attention! Jesus said, “Let him who is without sin first cast a stone” (John 8:7). What was Jesus saying? You are not fit to pass judgment on someone else when you have the same kind of sin in your own heart. Even the Old Testament law required that when a person was stoned, those who were witnesses and those who did the stoning had to be free from the same crime. What Jesus is doing is not requiring perfection because then there could never be any judgment in any matter, but what Jesus is doing is disallowing hypocrisy. And, these people were filled with hypocrisy, and Jesus knew it.

Now, a corresponding Scripture is Matthew chapter 7, verses 1 through 6, and it fits and intersects so much right here: Jesus said, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*”—“Why are you looking for sawdust in someone else’s eye when you’ve got a saw log in your own eye?”—“*Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye*” (Matthew 7:1–5). Is our Lord saying not to get a mote out of your brother’s eye? No, He’s just saying don’t try to do it when you’ve got a crossed eye in yours—do not be a hypocrite about this thing. And so, what our Lord is talking about is this—that you cannot judge, you should not judge, you must not judge with hypocritical, unrighteous judgment.

Do I expect the President of the United States to be a righteous man? Yes! Do I expect the Congress to be righteous? Yes! Do I expect the Senate to be righteous? Yes! Do we have a right to expect righteous, and godly, and law-abiding people to run our nation? The answer is yes, we do. Do we expect there to be no judgment in our land? Of course not! As a matter of fact, the Bible commands us to judge. In John chapter 7, verse 24, the Bible says, *“Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment”* (John 7:24). That’s what the Bible says. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 15: *“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). What was happening here was there was a lynching party. In their motive, and in their method, and in their hearts, they were terribly wrong. What they needed to do was to put down their rocks and get their hearts right.

Now, Jesus was not saying that there are civil cases that need not to be adjudicated and settled in law courts. That’s not what was at issue here. What was at the issue right here, in this particular incidence, was not a civil case, because it was no longer a civil law that this woman was breaking because of the Roman occupation. It had become a moral case. Civil law was not done away with. You read Romans chapter 13. Now, if you believe—if you believe—that we, as a nation, are not to have godly judges, honest men, honest women, judges and jurors to judge, then, my sweet friend, where are we? If that is true, logic says that we need to go to every prison in America and open the doors, apologize to the people, and invite all of them out, if we say we cannot judge. I mean, use a little logic.

I was reading an article just the other day. It’s written by William Bennett. By the way, William Bennett was the former Secretary of Education. He’s not a Baptist; he’s a Roman Catholic. But, here’s what he said in this article that I picked up: “Social regression”—regression, social regression—“and decadence are glaringly obvious in the current presidential administration. Now, whenever I make a comment these days criticizing Bill Clinton, someone inevitably asks, ‘Aren’t you casting stones?’ It shows how far we have fallen that calling upon the President of the United States to account for charges of adultery, lying to the public, perjury, and obstruction of justice is regarded as akin to stoning. It is an example of what sociologist Alan Wolfe refers to as ‘America’s new Eleventh Commandment’: ‘Thou shalt not judge.’” And then, William Bennett, this doctor of philosophy, said this—and I underlined it: “If a nation of free people can no longer make pronouncements on fundamental matters of right and wrong—for example, that a married 50-year old Commander-in-Chief ought not to have sexual relations with a young intern in his office and then lie about it—it has lost its way. The problem is not with those who are withholding judgment until the facts are in but with the increasing number of people who want to avoid judgment altogether.” And then, Dr. Bennett asked this question: “What would happen if those sitting on a jury decided

to be nonjudgmental about rapists, and sexual harassers, embezzlers, and tax cheats? Justice would be lost. Without being judgmental, Americans would never have put an end to slavery, outlawed child labor, emancipated women, or ushered in the Civil Rights Movement, nor would we have prevailed against Nazism and Communism or known how to explain our opposition.”

No, the Bible never says that people are not to judge. As a matter of fact, to the contrary, the Bible commands us to judge righteous judgment. What the Bible is against is the hypocrisy that was being practiced that day. So, there was a ruthless accusation. There was a revealing confrontation, where the Lord just took the lid off and showed that these Pharisees were certainly not fit to be the judge, the jury, and the executioner. He was not at all condoning adultery.

III. The Redeeming Transformation

As a matter of fact, I want us to see the final point here, and you’ll see that. The third thing I want you to see is what I want to call the *redeeming transformation*—a ruthless accusation, a revealing confrontation, and a redeeming transformation. Begin to read now in verse 10: “[*And*] when Jesus had lifted up himself, [*He*] saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers?”—of course, they’d all dropped their rocks and slinked off into the darkness—“*hath no man condemned thee? [And] she said, No man, Lord*”—underscore that—“No man, Lord”—just underscore the word *Lord*—“*And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*” (John 8:10–11).

Again, I want to remind you that Jesus was not condoning adultery. So many have used this passage to think that Jesus did. As a matter of fact, there was a case where there were some prostitutes who were plying their trade near an army base. And, when the military police and others came to round them up and to move them out, and the other people from the local law came to move out these prostitutes, one of them said this: “Why are you harassing us? Why are you condemning us? Why are you judging us? Jesus did not judge what we’re doing, and why should you?” Friend, listen—Jesus did not condone this sin; Jesus conquered this sin. I want you to see it—Jesus forgave and cleansed this sinful woman. He did not condone her sin. Now, what we have here is only the skeleton of the conversation, but we have the meat of it. We have the gist of it, and there’s so much to learn.

How did this transformation take place? What did Jesus Christ do in the heart and life of this woman? When the episode ends, she has a new life because she has a new Lord. Let me tell you how this woman was transformed.

A. Transformed by Grace

Number one: It was by grace. And, grace can never be offered until law is established. She was under condemnation. She deserved what the law of Moses said. The law did condemn her and would have condemned her had not Jesus, the giver of grace, reached out to her. Now, remember this: God is not fair; God is just. If you think God is fair, you're going to think God owes you something and you're not going to be satisfied when you get it. You'll think you deserve it, and you won't still be happy if somebody else gets more than you get. And, you wouldn't be happy if somebody else got it before you got it. But, when you realize that God is just, then you're ready for mercy. You're ready for the grace of God. It was by grace. Only when justice is established can grace be extended. Moses was right. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). But, here you see the grace of God. It was by grace.

B. Transformed Through Faith

And, it was through faith. *"For by grace are [you] saved through faith"* (Ephesians 2:8). She calls Jesus *Lord*—She calls Jesus *Lord*. Now, what does the Bible say? Romans 10:9 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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Romans 10:9–10). Her confession of her Lordship meant that she was now yielding her life to Him. She has become His servant. He has become her Master. That's what the word *Lord* means. It was by grace; it was through faith.

C. Transformed unto Good Works

And, it was unto good works. *"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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works"* (Ephesians 2:8–10). What did Jesus say to this woman? Jesus said, "I don't condemn you, for the Son of man came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). But then, Jesus said to this woman, *"Go, and sin no more"* (John 8:11). He didn't say, "Go, and sin some more." He said, *"Go, and sin no more"* (John 8:11). Her life is radically and dramatically changed by the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who gave the law through Moses. And now, the One who is Master of the law has extended grace to this woman.

Now, this episode—listen to me—this episode does not exclude civil matters, such as perjury, the suborning of justice, abuse of office. God has magistrates to take care of these matters. Romans chapter 13, verses 1 through 7: *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they*

that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake” (Romans 13:1–5).

Now, we—none of us—are fit to judge another person in moral matters with unconfessed and unclean hearts, but I want to tell you something, folks: the same Jesus that cleansed and forgave this woman so long ago is the Jesus who has cleansed and forgiven Adrian Rogers. By the grace of God, I’ve never committed adultery. I’ve never committed fornication by the grace of God. But, it took just as much of the grace of God to save me as it did this woman—and to save you. And, there’s grace for all of us.

I got a letter the other day from a woman—a lady. I’m not sure which. But, she said, “Mr. Rogers, I heard you preaching on television about sin.” She said, “You looked so angry.” She said, “You ought to just watch yourself preach. You ought to just look at one of the video tapes”—said, “You were so full of hate, and you were so full of spite.” She said, “Who are you to put yourself up on a pedestal and judge sin? You’re so self-righteous.” She said, “Don’t you know that Jesus would never condemn anybody for sin? Don’t you know that?” And, she said, “When I saw you preach that way, I made up my mind I would never set foot in a church again.” That broke my heart, not because... You know, I get a lot of funny letters, folks. I got a barrel full of them. That’s not it—that’s not it. It’s just the mentality that’s in the world today. As a matter of fact, if you think that I enjoy preaching this kind of sermon, you don’t know my heart.

This morning, Joyce and I held hands and prayed for the President of the United States of America, as we do most every Sunday morning. We pray for our nation, and I pray for this man. But, I’m telling you, folks—this nation is in a moral freefall. And, if we don’t come back to some common, old-fashioned, biblical decency, you can write it off. Hey, it’s all right for me. I’m saved, and I know where I’m going; but I’ve got some children and some grandchildren, and I want them to grow up in a society where right is right and wrong is wrong. And,

*Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so. (Anna Bartlett Warner)*

Conclusion

Let’s pray. Father God, thank You again for Your Word. And Lord, we don’t want to be rock-throwers when we have sin in our own heart and in our own lives. We don’t want to be hypocrites. We don’t want to be hard-hearted, and we don’t want to be soft-headed.

We want to be men and women of God. Bless us, Lord. We pray for our President. We pray for Mrs. Clinton. We pray for Hillary. We pray, Lord, for the Congress. We pray for the Senate. We pray for the Supreme Court. We pray for America in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Darkness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 29, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 9

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth."

JOHN 9:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. Spiritual Blindness Makes Beggars of Us All
 - A. He Was Blind
 - B. He Was Born Blind
 - C. He Became a Beggar
- II. The Blind Need More Than Light in Order to See
- III. Opened Eyes Must Learn to See
- IV. Man's Greatest Need Is to Confess and Admit His Need

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, praise the Lord. And would to God that that is the prayer and the soul desire of each of us tonight. Would you take God's Word and turn to John chapter 20 for just a moment. You know in these days we've been talking about the miracles in the Gospel of John. John had a purpose when he gave the Gospel of John, and of course, it was that we might believe in Jesus, and believing we might be saved. And he tells us about that purpose in John chapter 20 and, if you will, in verse 30. And he says this: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ,"—that is, the Messiah, the Son of God. "And that believing ye might have life through his name."

Now, John uses a particular name for miracles, and the name that John uses for miracles is the name, or the word, sign, because a sign was a miracle, but it was more than a miracle. It was a miracle with a message. It taught as well as performed. Remember what we told you that G. Campbell Morgan said? G. Campbell Morgan said that every parable that He did was a miracle of instruction. And every miracle that Jesus performed was a parable of teaching. Now, it's not that the miracles did not happen.

They literally happened. But you need to look beyond the miracles and to find the message in the miracle and the significance in the sign. And that's what we've been doing, because God gives us these signs—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven—and he says, "There now, see that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believe on Him, and you will have life."

When I was a little boy, we used to travel over the countryside on vacations, and we always looked for the Burma Shave signs. Now, if you're an older person, you remember the Burma Shave signs; if you're a youngster, you don't remember the Burma Shave signs. But Burma Shave was a shaving cream, and they would advertise Burma Shave by a series of signs, little poems, that would develop. And these signs would be in a series, and they would be maybe 50 yards apart. And there would be three or four of them. And the first one would say something like, "A peach looks good," the next sign, "with lots of fuzz," the next sign, "but man is no peach," the next sign, "and never was"; and then the last sign would say, "Burma Shave." And you would read these little signs, these little limericks—one, two, three, four, five—however many there would be, and then, at the end, it would give the conclusion. Well, the Burma Shave people may have thought they were unique with that, but God was doing it a long time ago: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven signs. At the end, it doesn't say Burma Shave; it says, Jesus Christ, Messiah, Son of God. And believe on Him and you will have everlasting life.

Now, we've already talked about some of these signs, some of these miracles. For example, when Jesus turned water into wine—that was the first of these signs. The wine had run out, and they were disappointed. The party was failing, and Jesus came along and turned water into wine. And that shows us that Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointments.

Then there was a nobleman who had a son, and that son was sick, and he came to Jesus, and asked Jesus to heal his son. But Jesus rebuked him at first. He said, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." This man's problem was his doubt, his unbelief. And then, Jesus simply gave His word, and the Bible says, and the man believed the word, and went his way, and the son was healed. Not only is Jesus God's answer to man's disappointment; Jesus is God's answer to man's doubt.

And then, we read where there was a man who was paralyzed, waiting for the water to be moved so he could put himself in the water and be healed miraculously. And Jesus came to this man totally paralyzed, and asked him, "Will you be made whole?" And the man said, yes, and the Lord healed him—radically, dramatically healed him. And what was the message in the miracle? That Jesus is God's answer to man's disability. We're like that man—sinners, completely without strength, until we're touched by the power of God.

And then there was a time when the crowd was hungry and there was no food. Jesus took a little lad's lunch, and fed five thousand men plus the women and children with a little lad's lunch. What is that? They were hungry. Jesus is God's answer to man's desires. He said, "I am the bread of life."

Now, tonight, we're going to see that Jesus is God's answer to man's darkness, because we're going to see Jesus healing a man that was born blind. Look, if you will now; go back to John chapter 9, and let's look at this miracle. Verse one: "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him saying, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither had this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. "

I. Spiritual Blindness Makes Beggars of Us All

Now, the first thing I want you to see, the first truth I want you to learn tonight, is this: that spiritual blindness makes beggars of us all—spiritual blindness makes beggars of us all. Here was a man, verse one tells us, that he was blind. Now, remember that this man was physically blind, but he is an illustration of a man without the Lord Jesus Christ. John begins his Gospel in John chapter one and verse four. It speaks of Jesus, and it says, "In him—in Jesus—was life, and the life was the light of man." Now, what happened when man sinned? When Adam sinned, what happened? Adam became minus God in his spirit. Now, Adam was made perfect when God created him, and God lived in Adam. And Adam was a temple in which God could live. But when God said to Adam, in the day that you sin against me you will surely die, and when Adam sinned against God, he did die. But how did he die? He didn't die physically, because physically he lived hundreds of years. He died spiritually. What happened is that the life went out of Adam, the spiritual life. Remember again John 1, verse four: "In him was life, and the life was the light of man." Now, you think about it. When the Lord went out, the life went out. And when the life went out, the light went out. Can you remember that? When the Lord went out, the life went out. And when the life went out, the light went out. You see, in Him is life, in the Lord is life, and the life was the light.

Now, every man that is a son of Adam has the nature of Adam, and he is minus God, he is minus the Lord, minus the life, and minus the light. And so, therefore, this man that was born blind is only illustrative of every man, woman, boy, and girl without the Lord Jesus. So when the Lord went out, he was what? Depraved. When the life went out, he was what? Dead. And when the light went out, he was what? Darkened. And so, he is now depraved, dead, and darkened, because he doesn't have the Lord in him any more. Does that make sense to you? That's what it means to be lost. To be lost, you don't have to be a rapist, or a murderer, bank robber, an arsonist,

blasphemer—just be minus God. We're sons of Adam, and in Adam all die.

A. **He Was Blind**

So, Jesus says to every man, every woman, you're blind—you're blind. What did He tell Nicodemus back in the third chapter of John? John chapter 3, verse 3: "He said to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" Now, he might see physical material things, but he can't understand spiritual things. What does Ephesians 4, verse 18, say of every man, woman, boy, and girl without Christ? "Having the understanding darkened,"—not the eyes, but the understanding darkened—"being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." Now, there's more than one kind of blindness. There's the blindness of the eyes. There's the blindness of the heart. And so, this man was blind.

B. **He Was Born Blind**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to notice about him: not only was he blind; he was born blind. Look, if you will again. The Bible says in verse one he was blind from his birth. Now, the disciples ask a foolish question: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Well, perhaps his parents could have sinned and he be born blind. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes little babies are born blind because of venereal disease, and it is possible that a baby could be born blind because of a parents sin. Of course, obviously, some little babies are born blind, not because of the parent's sin; but he asked, who did sin? Did this little baby sin that it what born blind? I don't know whether thy believed in reincarnation, or maybe the baby sinned in his mother's womb or some kind of crazy thing. But, frankly, it was a pretty stupid question. And Jesus said, this man didn't sin that he was born blind, neither was it his parents, but here is an opportunity for the work of God, that God's work might be done in him. But how does he become an illustration of every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl? Number one: he was blind; and, number two: he was born blind.

Did you know that we were all born blind? Spiritually, we were all born blind. The Bible says in Psalm 51 and verse 5, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother conceive me." Now, that doesn't mean that I was conceived out of wedlock. But when it says, in sin did my mother conceive me, that means that I was a sinner in conception. I was born, I was conceived, with a sinful nature. Even your little precious granddaughter—believe it or not—she has a sinful nature. And she needs, when she reaches the age of accountability, to be saved.

Listen to this verse—Ephesians 2, verse 3. It speaks of those of us who were lost: "Among whom also, we all had our conversation—or behavior—in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the

children of wrath, even as others.” So this man was blind; he was born blind.

C. He Became a Beggar

Now, not only was he blind, and born blind, but go down to verse 8 and find out something else about him: “The neighbors, therefore, and they which had seen him that was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?” He was blind, he was born blind, and he became a beggar. And again, he represents every man, woman, boy, and girl without the Lord Jesus Christ. What did God create man to be? A king. When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, He gave Adam and Eve dominion. That is, they were to rule. Adam and Eve were king and queen of planet earth. Mankind was to have dominion. But man who was created to be a king, a spiritual king, is now a blind beggar. And, you know, there may be somebody here tonight and you’ve got a lot of money salted away somewhere. You say, well, I may be blind, and I may have been born blind spiritually, but I’m certainly no beggar; I’m pretty rich. Well, you don’t understand the kind of beggar I’m talking about. Listen to this verse in Revelation chapter 3, verse 17: “Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked”—poor, blind, and naked. What a picture of mankind without the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, let me just put down the first thing in your heart, and in my heart, and let’s see if we can learn it from John chapter 9, that spiritual blindness makes beggars of us all.

II. The Blind Need More Than Light in Order to See

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to learn—and this is very, very important: the blind need more than light in order to see. Now, begin now with verse two: “And the disciples asked him saying, ‘Who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’” And, by the way, that is the meaning of the miracle: that Jesus is the light of the world. “When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam (which is, by interpretation, sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”

Now, here was a man who was blind, and Jesus, the light of the world, was in his presence. He was there in the sunshine, he was there in the light, but he could not see. The blind need more than light to see. A blind man may not see the light, but he would be foolish to deny the light just simply because he cannot see it. But this scripture tells us that man needs more than light; he needs sight. Now, listen very carefully, because

some of you have loved ones that are lost. Some of you want to be soul winners. There's a great truth here. There can be no sight without light, but there can be light without sight.

Now, I have visited Carlsbad Caverns—some of you have done that, or maybe gone into some deep cave and had the people turn out all the lights—and the darkness is so deep that you could almost slice it. And no matter if you have 20/20 vision you can't see a thing there because there's no sight without light. You agree to that, I hope.

There is no sight without light, but there can be light without sight. I mean, a man could be standing blind at high noon, and still not see. Now, what is the point here? We need to understand this: that men need more than light in order to be saved. They can't be saved without the light, but they also need the sight.

Put this scripture down—2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3 and 4—Paul said, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost, 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. Now, Satan cannot put out the light. So what does he do? He blinds the heart; he blinds the mind. The Bible says the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. Therefore, it takes more than preaching to get people saved.

I used to think as a young preacher that what you had to do to get people saved was just to tell them how to be saved, just turn on the light. But it doesn't matter how much light there is; if the person is blind, he can't see it. You understand what I'm talking about? It takes more than light; it takes sight. And a person who is blind cannot see the light, no matter how strong the light is or how pure the light is. It takes more than preaching to get people saved. That's the reason I frequently say to you, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. That is the reason we must be a praying church. That is the reason that you must be a Spirit-filled soul winner. That is the reason that we must have the anointing, because we are dependent upon God to open blinded eyes to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It takes more than light; it takes sight.

We need to understand that nobody can be argued into the kingdom of heaven. Nobody can be educated into the kingdom of heaven. I'm not against letting the light shine. You must let the light shine. You must preach. But remember there is another dimension. This man was blind, and there he was face to face with the Light of the world, but he could not see. Now, notice what the Lord Jesus did—verses 6 and 7. Now, Jesus does something remarkable. “And when he had thus spoken...”—he said, you know, I am the light of the world. Now, there's the light there. But now Jesus is going to do something else—“And when he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle”—that is, just mud made of clay, or dirt and spit—“and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam,

which is, by interpretation, Sent. He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”

Now, what does this mean? What does the clay represent? It represents the same thing to me that those six water pots represented. Remember those stone water pots, earthen water pots? Clay speaks of humanity. How did God make man? God made man of the dust of the earth. And because it speaks of humanity, it speaks of weakness, it speaks of failure, it speaks of inability; and to put clay on his eyes represents that which would seal out the light. That’s what’s wrong with him: his humanity, his nature. That’s what has caused him to be blind.

Then, our Lord, I think, with a twinkle in His eye, said, “Go wash in the pool called Siloam.” Now, what does that mean? In that language, translated, it means, go wash in the pool called Sent. Look at it: “Which is by interpretation Sent”—s-e-n-t. Now, why did our Lord say that? Well, I prayed over this, and I said, Lord, I want you to help me understand this. Why did you tell this man to go wash in a pool called Sent? Why did the Holy Spirit put that into Word? What is the significance of that? And so, I went back, and I began to go back to chapter eight and to read. And way back in chapter eight, Jesus is talking about being the light of the world.

Go back to chapter 8 and verse 12: “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.’” Now, the Jews wouldn’t accept this, and so look in verse 23: “And he said unto them, ‘Ye are from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this world; I am not of this world.’” That is, I belong in heaven. My origin is heaven. Here Jesus is speaking about His identification with God the Father. But now go down to verse 26: “I have many things to say and to judge of you,”—now underscore this—“He that sent me is true.” I have that highlighted in green in my Bible: “He that sent me is true.”

Now, go down to verse 29: “And he that sent me is with me.” Go to chapter 9 and look in verse 4. Jesus said before He healed this man, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day.” And then, go down to verse 7 where He says, go wash in the pool called Sent. Well, I said Lord, I see it; I understand. The Lord here, He’s saying, this pool represents me. I am the One sent from heaven. I am the One. I am heaven’s answer for man’s darkness. And your humanity blocks out the light—this dirt, this dust, this clay. But I have been sent from above. I am heaven’s light for earth’s darkness. I am the only One that can take away this darkness, the heaven-sent Son of God.

So now, we need to understand, we are by nature spiritually blind. We need to understand that *man needs more than light; he needs sight, and that Jesus Christ is the only One who can give that sight.*

III. Opened Eyes Must Learn to See

Now, here's the third thing we need to learn: opened eyes, or eyes once open, can see the light, but they must learn to see—they must learn to see. Go to chapter 9 and verse 35 for just a moment. Begin to read here: "And Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he had found him, he said unto him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' And he answered and said, 'Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?' And Jesus said unto him, 'Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.' And he said, 'Lord I believe,' and he worshiped him."

Opened eyes must learn to see. Now, what had happened to this man was that, once he was healed, the Pharisees got out after him. And because he had allowed Jesus to heal him, they were going to put him out of the synagogue. And they began to ask him all kinds of questions. And he really infuriated them, because they said, who is he that healed you? What were his credentials? Who ordained him? Now, they didn't say it this way, but this is what they would say today: what seminary did he go to—ta da ta da ta da? And this man looked at them—and I love this. He said, I don't know what you're asking. I can't answer those questions, but I'll tell you one thing: once I was blind, and now I can see. Now, that's great. And we're going to talk about that in just a moment. Well, that infuriated them. Once I was blind, and now I can see. But they shut him out, and Jesus sought him out. They are the blight of the world. He is the light of the world. Religion without Christ is a blight. But Jesus sought this man out, and Jesus begins to work with this man.

Now, he's had his eyes opened, but he's not yet saved. The Lord is enabling him to believe. The Lord is giving him understanding. He is leading him from a non-saving faith to a saving faith. He is believing about Jesus before he's trusting on Jesus. Now, look again at his testimony. What a testimony he had. Look, if you will, in verse 25: "He answered and said, 'Whether he be a sinner or not, I know not. One thing I know: that whereas I was blind, now I see.'" Well, that was a pretty good testimony, as far as it went. But I mean, if you were to ask me, Adrian, do you know whether Jesus was a sinner or not? I'd say, well, I really don't know whether He was a sinner or not. That wouldn't be a very good testimony. But it was a good testimony when he said it, for this man, at this stage, that's all he knew. He didn't know any more. All he knew was that he had been blind, he was born blind, he was a beggar, Jesus put spit and clay on his eyes, he went and washed in the pool whose name was Sent, and now he can see. That's all he knows. He doesn't know anything about Jesus. He's certainly not a theologian. You see, his eyes are opened, not only physically, but now I want you to see how Jesus is going to open his eyes spiritually.

And what's he illustrating here? That it takes more than light; it takes sight. And once you get both light and sight, you still have to learn to see. Now, notice the progression in

this man. This man had honest ignorance.

Will Rogers said that a man doesn't show his ignorance by not knowing so much as he does by knowing so much that ain't so. This man, he only knew what he knew. And, by the way, always remember this in your testimony. Don't ever be afraid to give your testimony. Don't ever be afraid somebody's going to ask you something you don't know. If anybody asks you something you don't know when you're sharing Jesus, I'll give you the perfect answer. You want to know what it is? Just say, I don't know. Isn't that a great answer? When you tell them that you don't know what you don't know, then they will believe you when you tell them what you do know. They will. When you say, hey, I don't know, but let me tell you this: once I was blind; now I see. You see, tell them what you do know, and just when you don't know, tell them that you don't know, so they'll believe you when you tell them what you do know.

So, a Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments. I mean, they wanted to argue with this man. He said, hey, once I was blind, and now I can see. They could not argue with that. He has an honest ignorance.

But I want you to understand this: that the Holy Spirit guides you into truth; the Holy Spirit does not give you truth. Did you hear that? The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, when He has come, He will guide into all truth. Once you have the light, you must learn to see. Now, I want you to notice how this man went through a progression.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 11. He gets healed, and they said to him in verse 10, "How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, 'A man that is called Jesus made clay.'" A man—some man did this. His name is Jesus. He made clay. He did it. That's all he knew about Him. He was a man. Now, they said was He a sinner. I don't know. Just a man. That's step number one.

But now, I want you to notice, go on down to verse 17 of this same chapter: "And they said unto the blind man again, 'What sayest thou of him that he hath opened thine eyes.' He said, ' He is a prophet.'" And now he's beginning to think on it a little bit. He's saying, this man's more than a man. He is a prophet.

Now, go on over to verse 33, if you will. And well, at verse 31, he is saying, "We know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshiper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began, it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." Notice his progression now. Notice how he is beginning to see more and more. First, "He's a man; I don't know whether He's a sinner or not." Now, he's saying He's a prophet. Now, he is saying He is a man sent of God. Here is a man sent of God.

But now I want you to notice how his faith completely ripens. I want you to look in verses 35 through 38: "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he had found him, he said unto him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?'" Now, see, he hadn't

gotten there yet. “He answered and said, ‘Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?’” He believes He’s a man, he believes He’s a prophet, he believes He’s sent from God, but he doesn’t know yet He’s the Son of God, or who He is. “Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou hast both seen him,’—aha, his eyes are open now—“and it is he that talketh with thee.’ And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped.”

Do you see this? You see, the man who’s been given sight is now learning to see. And that’s the way that people come to the Lord Jesus Christ. God has to open their eyes. The Holy Spirit of God has to give them insight, spiritual insight. But then they begin to learn to grow in knowledge until they come to that full-orbed faith. Let me give you some scriptures that teach that. Luke 18, verse 18: “Take heed, therefore, how ye hear. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given. And whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. So, be very careful when you come to church how you hear, because if you have a desire for truth, you’ll be given more truth. But if you don’t have desire for truth, even that which you seem to have will be taken away from you.

Or, put down this scripture—Romans chapter 1, verse 17: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the just shall live by faith.” Now, how does God speak to you? From faith to faith. Here was a man; he says, well, He opened my eyes. That’s a little bit of faith. And then, he goes from that faith to this faith. He says, He’s a prophet. And he goes from that faith to this faith. He says, He’s sent from God. And he goes from that faith to this faith. He’s says, He is the Son of God; I believe. And he’s saved. He goes from faith to faith. To him that has will be given. You see, once the eyes are opened, then you need to be able to understand.

Put this scripture down—Proverbs chapter 4, verse 18: “But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more into a perfect day.” At first, it’s grey dawn. And then, the sun comes over the horizon, and you can see, but there are just shadows, very little color. Then, the sun gets up a little bit more; you can see, but they’re long shadows. And then, finally, it is high noon, and there are no shadows. That’s the way God gives us spiritual wisdom.

And so, we are born blind beggars. It takes more than light; it take sight. It takes a miracle. But once God opens our eyes, then we have to learn to see.

IV. Man’s Greatest Need Is to Confess and Admit His Need

Now, here’s the final thing I want us to see tonight: that man’s greatest need, therefore, is to confess and to admit his need. Now, go look, if you will, in that same chapter, and look in verse 39: “Jesus said, ‘For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not, might see, and they which see might be made blind.’ And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, ‘Are we blind

also?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘If ye were blind, ye should have no sin. But now ye say, we see. Therefore, your sin remaineth.’”

You know the proverb, there are none so blind as those who refuse to see. And so, those who claim to be full, Jesus sent away hungry. Those who claim to be righteous were sent away unforgiven. And those who claim to see remain blind. Man’s greatest need is to see his spiritual blindness. And the Bible makes that very clear. Just as light obeyed increases light, light refused increases darkness.

Listen to this scripture—Romans chapter 1, verse 21: “Because that when they knew God,”—that is, when their eyes were opened—“they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Light obeyed increases light. Light refused increases darkness.

Now, there can be no greater sin than to reject the light. Once a man hears the gospel and his heart is opened to the Word of God, if he does not act upon that light, and go from faith to faith until he believes in Jesus Christ, his condemnation is doubled, because not only is he judged for the disease, he’s also judged that he refused the cure. Listen to this scripture—John 3, verses 19 and 20: “And this is the condemnation: that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because the deeds were evil. Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.”

Conclusion

When God comes to judge the world, He’s not going to judge the world primarily by the sin that was committed, but by the light that was rejected. And what does this miracle show? That Jesus is the Light of the world. We are born blind beggars, but those blind eyes can be opened and will be opened by the grace of God. It’s not just turning on the light; the heart, the mind, has to be opened and quickened to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. And once the heart, once the mind is opened and quickened, then we live up to the light that we have, we go stepping in the light, till we come to Jesus. Man’s greatest need is to admit and confess his spiritual blindness. When he says, I see, he remains blind, but when he says, God help me, I’m blind, God opens his eyes and gives him light.

Let’s pray together. Lord Jesus, I pray that you will seal this message to our hearts. And I pray, God, should there be someone here tonight whose eyes, heart, and mind you’ve opened, help them to say what this man said—I believe that Thou art the Son of God—and to worship you, Lord Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen.

Midnight at High Noon

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 21, 1990

Main Scripture Text: John 9

Sponsored by: Sponsor

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

JOHN 9:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. Spiritual Blindness Makes Beggars of Unserved Men
- II. A Blind Man Needs More Than Light in Order to See
- III. Opened Eyes Must Learn to See

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word if you would please and turn to John chapter 9. John chapter 9. I want to begin reading in verse 1: "And Jesus passed by, and as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. And when he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." The light of the world is Jesus. The title of my message today, however, is "Midnight at High Noon."

I have a precious friend. Her name is Marilyn Ford. He is married to another one of my dear friends, A. C. Ford, and they labor here in our city as associate pastor and wife of the wonderful Broadmoor Baptist Church. What many people don't know about Marilyn is the miracle that God gave her. Marilyn became blind with a progressive, degenerative disease in her eyes. And as a young lady she had to go to the school for the blind, had to learn to tap with a cane, had to learn to live by her senses other than her sense of sight. When she went off to Tennessee Temple School, she had to take her tape recorder to class because she could not take the notes as others could take

the notes. She met this fine, young man, A. C. Ford, and they were married, and God gave them a precious child that she'd not seen with her physical eyes. She carried on her ministry as a pastor's wife over in Arkansas doing as best she could and they could with those sightless eyes. One night late at night after they'd been out, they came in. They'd prayed many times to ask God to give Marilyn her sight back. But on this particular night they had come in from a long journey. They were tired. That night, her husband, A. C. Ford, decided one more time that he would pray and ask God to heal those blind eyes. He knelt beside the bed and he said, "Oh God, we accept Your will, whatever it is, but, God, we know that You have the power to heal Marilyn. Lord, that You could open those eyes of her. And, Lord, by Your grace, through Your power, for Your glory, heal Marilyn." And when he had said those words, Marilyn said, "A. C., I can see!" He said, "What?" She said, "I can see!" He said, "Do you mean it?" She said, "Yes, A. C. I can see!" And she said, "I can see you, and you need a shave." He ran and got a newspaper and said – it had been a long time since she had read. He said, "Can you read the headlines?" She said, "A.C., I can read the fine print," and she read it to him. They didn't know what to do. Afraid to go to sleep, afraid when they waked up it would not still be so. They felt like they wanted to run up and down outside in the community and shout and wake the neighborhood, that God had done such a miracle. That story is written in a very wonderful book. I think you may get a copy in our bookstore if you want, "These Blind Eyes Now See." And I have talked and fellowshiped with this couple so many times. And beyond the shadow of any doubt, God instantaneously, wonderfully, miraculously performed a miracle and opened those blind eyes to prove that He is still the God of might and the God of miracle.

But, my dear friend, a greater miracle than that is the miracle of the salvation of a soul when God opens spiritually blinded eyes to see Jesus, the light of the world. Now the gospel of John is written. John tells us in chapter 20 there are many, many miracles that Jesus did; many wonderful things that Jesus performed. But John said, "The ones that I have selected are selected that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing you might have life through His name." Therefore, the story that Jesus gave us here in John chapter 9 of the opening of the eyes of the blind is an illustration of salvation. Never forget it. It was a lit, literal miracle. God performed a miracle so long ago when Jesus Christ walked the shore of blue Galilee and the dusty streets of Jerusalem. God performed miracles then. But this miracle, which was a literal miracle, is a greater illustration of the greater miracle of salvation. And so I want you to see this miracle and see what God has to say to those of you today who need to have not physical eyes open, but spiritual eyes opened. Now let me tell you about four things this morning that I pray God the Holy Spirit will etch into your consciousness, emblazoned into your mind, and cause to reverberate through your

soul.

I. Spiritual Blindness Makes Beggars of Unserved Men

Number one: Spiritual blindness makes beggars of unsaved men. Spiritual blindness makes beggars of unsaved men. Verse 1: And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.” And then verse 8: “The neighbors therefore and they which before had seen him that was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?” He was a blind beggar.

Now let me talk to you for a moment about that. He was blind. He was physically blind. But as I tell you that was only an illustration of the greater spiritual blindness that is inherent in mankind. Remember what Jesus told that learned PhD, that wise and erudite man called Nicodemus? Remember what Jesus told this man who thought that he could see so perceptively? Jesus said to him in John chapter 3, verse 3:

“Nicodemus, except a man be born again, he cannot (what’s the next word?) see.... Except a man be born again, he cannot see....”

You see, here was a man who was blind. It’s a picture of all people outside of Jesus Christ. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 18 says this: “They have the understanding darkened, they’re alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them (now listen to this next phrase), because of the blindness of their hearts.” Many are listening to me today who can see perfectly, and yet your heart is blind. This man was blind. I’ll tell you something else about him.

Not only was he blind; he was blind from his birth. He was born blind. That’s what the Bible says in verse 1. He was born blind. Now the disciples and others were into a question. They wanted to know why he was born blind. Was it because of his personal sin or parental sin? Jesus said that his blindness was neither personal nor parental, but congenital. He was simply born blind. And so is every man outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. David said in Psalm 51: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me.” That is, “I was born with the seeds of sin and spiritual darkness in my heart.” And the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3: “...we are by nature the children of wrath...” Every person who is born into this world is born spiritually blind.

And because he was blind and born blind, he was a blind beggar. And so is every man outside of the Lord Jesus. Now you may have several hundred thou in the bank this morning. You may drive to church this morning in a luxury automobile. You may be dressed in silken threads this morning. But, O, if you could only understand outside of Jesus what a beggar you are. “Oh,” you say, “I don’t have any, I don’t have any needs.” You remind me of those in Laodicea where the Lord Jesus said in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 17: “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.” That’s the way God sees you. Here was a man. He was blind. He was born blind and he became a beggar. Jesus is using that as an illustration of every man outside the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. A Blind Man Needs More Than Light in Order to See

Now there’s a second thing I want you to see—that a blind man needs more than light in order to see. A blind man needs more than light in order to see. Notice verse 5. Jesus said, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” But this blind man needed more than light. Listen, dear friend. A blind man may not see the light, but he would be foolish to deny the light just because he cannot see it. We have some precious blind members of our congregation who come and worship with us every Sunday. They know the light is shining in here, but they can’t see it. But none of them would be so foolish as to deny it. They know that the light is shining, but, you see, the blind need more than light. They need sight.

Now the light is the truth, dear friend; the sight is the salvation. Now there can be no salvation without truth, but there can be truth without salvation, unless you receive the truth and are saved. You see, there are people who will sit here today bathed in the light of this message who will never see that light. Second Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3-4, listen to it. The apostle Paul said, If our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not...” Dear friend, this, this auditorium can be bathed in gospel light and the blind will sit here and not see. Listen to it. “In whom the god of this world...” And who is the god of this world? The devil. “...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.”

Now what does that tell us? I’ll tell you what it tells me, dear friend. I want to reiterate it again that the blind need more than light in order to see. It tells me that no one will ever be educated into the kingdom of God. And it tells me that no one will ever be argued into being a Christian. Don’t ever get into an argument with an unsaved man and think you can argue him into heaven. You can’t. When you argue with him and he says, “I just don’t see it,” he’s not lying. He’s telling the truth. He can’t see it. And don’t scold him for not seeing it anymore than you would scold a literally blind man for not seeing a sunset. He can’t see it until there is a miracle that takes place in his heart and in his life.

Remember this: That no man can be saved without truth, but it takes a miracle for him to understand the truth. God must open his eyes spiritually. No one is argued or educated into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, we must pray, “Oh God, Spirit of the living God, perform a miracle today in this place and open eyes so that they can see the light that the pastor is preaching.” No pastor ever opened anybody eyes. All he does is

proclaim the truth. It is God that opens the eyes to see the truth.

It's so wonderful the way the Lord Jesus did it that day. Don't ever tell me that Jesus doesn't have a sense of humor. I love this passage. It just literally, folks, it tickles me when I read it. Now He is talking to the ossified, petrified, calcified Pharisees. They hated Him. They hated the light. He was the light of the world, and they hated Him. They hated Him because of their pride.

And so here is a man and Jesus, right in front of these Pharisees, He opens this man's blind eyes and He does it on the Sabbath just to rub a little salt in their wounds. And I want you to notice how He did it. It so funny to me. Look. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. And when he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay."

Now that's real high-class medicine, isn't it? Spit and dirt. Puts it in their eyes. Here, here's this man. He's blind. Jesus spits on the ground, makes a wad of clay, puts it on both eyes. Now this is a man. He's been blind from his birth. "And he said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, what is that next word? Sent, S-E-N-T, Sent.)"

Now don't miss this. I was sitting in my study when I saw it and I almost fell off my chair. It just blessed me so much. I didn't find it in any commentary, but I, I just, I, I just saw it. I said, "Why did He tell him to go wash in a pool Siloam? Why did He put clay on his eyes? And why does the Bible make it so clear that the name Siloam is Sent?" Well, you see, dear friend, that clay speaks of man's humanity. Man was made of the dust of the earth. He's made of clay. That is, his weakness, his failure, his humanity. And that clay is, He puts it on his eyes as if to say, "This is what is sealing out the light, your humanity, your, your frailness, your earthiness. That's what's sealing out the light." And then He tells him, "Now that I've put this clay on your eyes, you go wash in a pool that is called Sent." Now what is the pool stand for? If the clay stands for man's weakness and humanity, what does the pool stand for? The pool is a picture of the heaven-sent Savior.

Now let me prove it to you and show you how beautiful it is. Now go back to John chapter 8 for a moment and look with me in verse 12. And I'll tell you why this is, it's just so funny to me, in a sanctified way you understand. All right. John 8, verse 12: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world..." See, this thing's been going on even before you get to chapter 9. The chapter divisions are there just to keep preachers from preaching too long. All right now. "Then Jesus spake again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Now understand, Jesus is talking more than about physical blindness therefore. It's very clear. All right. Now look in verse 23 if you will: "And he said unto them, You are from beneath. Yeah, you're the clay, see. I am from above; you are of this world; I am

not of this world.” He’s speaking now of His heavenly origin. Now look, if you will, in verse 26: “I have many things to say and to judge of you; but he that sent me is true...” Oh, oh. Remember that word Sent? Remember that word Sent? The pool means Sent. Now watch this. “...he that sent me is true....”

Now skip on down to verse 29: “He that (what?) sent me is with me...” Oh, it’s getting exciting here. Skip on down to verse 42: “Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he (what?) sent me. He sent me.” Then look, if you will, go right on to John chapter 9, verse 4 before He opens the eyes of this blind man. “I must work the works of him that (what?) sent me, while it is day...” I am the one that has been sent. You’re from beneath. You’re like this clay. I am from above. I’ve been sent. So He puts clay on the blind man’s eyes and says, “Now go wash in a pool, which is called (you tell me what) Sent.” Jesus is the light of the world, my dear friend. Jesus is the only one who can remove this blindness. Isn’t that neat? I tell you, that, that’s just a blessing to me as I, I think about that.

And so Jesus, with a twinkle in His eye, said, “You go wash in a pool called Sent because I am the heaven-sent Savior.” And the only one that can take away your blindness is the heaven-sent Son of God. Now what have I said, dear friend? I have said that spiritual blindness makes beggars of us all. I’ve said, secondly, that the blind need more than light to see. They need sight. The blind need more than light to see. They need a miracle. Now here’s a third thing I want you to see as we, we think about midnight at high noon. And it was midnight at high noon for this man until Jesus did a miracle on him.

III. Opened Eyes Must Learn to See

The third thing I want you to see is this: That opened eyes must learn to see. Opened eyes must learn to see. Now remember, this man who was born blind. I mean, when Jesus performed a miracle on him, he’d never seen a face. He said, “Oh, that’s what a sheep looks like. Oh, that’s the sky. So that is a cloud. Oh, this is a tree.” Now he could see, but he had to learn what he was seeing. You see, when a man receives spiritual sight, then he must take that spiritual sight and he must grow. Let me point this out. Look, if you will, now, beginning in verse 35, ah, John chapter 9 and verse 35. Jesus heard that they had cast Him out.

By the way, this man got saved and the Pharisees, they were so infuriated. They were like that grinch, you know. When he saw anybody having fun, he bit himself. You know, they can’t stand it that this man has joy and happiness. And it makes them so angry. They say, “Well, get rid of him.” So they cast him out of the synagogue (verse 35). But when the Pharisees shut him out, Jesus sought him out. I love that, dear friend. “Jesus

heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him (Jesus now sought him out), he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" I mean, he, he'd never even seen the face of Jesus. Who is He, that I might believe on Him? "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

Now I want you to see how this man is now learning to use his eyes. His eyes have just been opened. But he goes from an immature faith to a very mature faith. He goes from what I call a searching faith to a settled faith. Now, you see, he meets the Lord Jesus. Jesus has healed him. His physical eyes are open. He's been cast out of the synagogue. But now Jesus wants to bring him to that full faith, that full salvation. And so the Pharisees had found him. Go back to verse 24: "Then again called they the man that was blind..." Now these are the Pharisees. "...and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know this man is a sinner." Go ahead and admit that the man who healed you is a sinner.

Now remember, this man is talking to these intellectual theological high muckety-mucks and top waters and he doesn't know how to answer them. I mean, he's been a beggar. He's had no education, no been to school. He can't read. He can't do anything. And they say, "Give God the glory and call Jesus a sinner." Now here's what he answers. "And he answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, whereas I was once blind, now I see." Don't you love that? Don't you love that? Look, listen to it again. "...the one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Now, friend, I want to ask you a question. What good were all of their musty, dusty books and all of their cynical arguments in the face of that testimony? Listen to me, dear friend, those of you who were saved last week. You don't have to be a PhD to witness for Jesus. A Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments. I mean, a man who can say this, "I don't know the answer to that, and I don't know the answer to this," and, dear friend, you don't have to know the answer to everything. You just simply say, "This I do know." A witness only tells what he knows, what he has seen. Jesus said, "You're My witnesses." He said, "Let me tell you what I do know. Once I was blind, and now I see."

What a testimony that was. But, wait a minute. I wouldn't expect him to say twenty years from now, "Whether Jesus is a sinner or not, I don't know." I wouldn't expect him to say that twenty years from now. That's all right right there. That's all right for that moment because that's all he knew. But, dear friend, now that his eyes have been opened, he must learn to see. Why does God open your eyes so that you can see? And so I want you to see how this man goes on to a full-orbed testimony. I want you to see

how quickly he is learning now concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look with me very quickly here in verse 11; chapter 9 and verse 11. I want you to see the progression here. I want you to see how he goes from truth to truth. Notice the progression. If you don't mind underscoring your Bible, find verse 11: "And he answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes..." That's the beginning step. He knew this much, that He was a man. Okay. A man. That's all some know about Jesus.

But I tell you, my dear friend, you are doubly loaded with ignorance if you don't at least confess that Jesus is a man. I mean, He did come to this earth. No reputable historian would deny the fact there was a man named Jesus who lived in Galilee so long ago. And so here this man says, first of all, "He's a man."

But after he listens a little more and understands some more things, skip on down to verse 17: "They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes He said (underscore this), He is a prophet." Ha, ha. Do you see, do you see how the light is just dawning on him? "He's a man," and He was a man. But now, "He is a prophet." But now, wait a minute. He's continuing to see and he's beginning to, to use his eyes. Go on to verse 33. And now he says, as he continues to argue with them, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." Now He's a man. He's more than a man. He is a prophet. He's more than a prophet. He is a man of God.

But now, wait a minute. He's not finished with him yet. And look in verse 35: "And Jesus, ah, heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him." In verse 35 underscore "Son of God." A man, a prophet, a man of God, Son of God! Do you see it? Do you see how he goes stepping in the light? Do you see that God opened his eyes? And with his opened eyes he is learning and learning and learning and learning.

My dear friend, God didn't open your blinded eyes just to have you sit around. Do you want to learn truth? You can learn truth. Well, you say, "Oh, the Holy Spirit will give me truth." No, the Holy Spirit's not going to give you truth. Jesus said, "He will guide you into all truth." But you, my dear friend, must want to learn the truth. Luke 8 and verse 18: "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

Now what does that mean? It means, dear friend, *the way to have more light is to obey the light that you have*. Put this verse down, Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 18: "The path of the just is as a shining light. It shineth more and more unto the perfect day." I love that verse. What God says is, "Here's the way a man grows in grace and knowledge. The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto a

perfect day.” When you first have your eyes opened spiritually, it’s just great on. The light is just coming over the horizon. You see some things. You see some shapes of trees or houses. You just can see. But then the sun, sunrise begins to happen in the soul, and the sun comes up. And the first thing you know, or after a while it’s high noon, a perfect day, and you see without any shadow at all. “The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto a perfect day.” That’s the way, dear friend, it is to be for you. It takes more than light. It takes sight.

But once God gives you sight, then you must use the sight that you have to learn to see. Man’s biggest need is to admit his blindness. Man’s biggest need is to admit his blindness. Now come to verse 39: “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see (that is, with their physical eyes) might be made blind.” That is, that they might understand the spiritual darkness of their hearts. “And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?” Ha, ha, these, Jesus called them blind leaders of the blind. “Are we blind also?” Now notice verse 41: “Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.”

Now listen, dear friend. Man’s biggest need is to see his need. Man’s biggest need is to admit his blindness. There are none so blind as those who refuse to see. You see, when Jesus met someone who claimed to be righteous, He sent that one away unforgiven. When He met someone who claimed, ah, to be full, He sent that one away hungry. When He met someone who claimed to see, that person still remained blind.

Do you know what kept these Pharisees from coming to Jesus? It was their arrogance, their dishonesty, and their abominable pride. There are many in this auditorium today who need the light, but your problem is, you sit there and say, “There’s nothing wrong with me. I’ve got 20/20.” And that’s the reason you’ll never get saved because you say.... Jesus looked at it. “Because you say we see, therefore your sin remaineth.”

I heard about a king who visited one of these slave galleys. You know, they didn’t used to run these ships with diesel, but they would put a lot of slaves beneath the, ah, the decks. And they chained these slaves to these massive oars, row upon row of them, and they would pull at the beat of a drum. And there would be a lichter there with a great whip to make them work harder. And the drum would beat so they would row in cadence. Those were the awfulest prisons and the most honourous torture of the day. And the king went walking through the, ah, slave galley to see these slaves. And he thought he would interview some of the prisoners. He asked one man, “Why are you here chained to this oar?” He said, “O, sire,” he said, “I’m here as an unfortunate, an unfortunate set of circumstances.” He said, “I was standing in a crowd when a heinous

crime was committed and," he said, "I was picked up with the rest of them." He said, "I, I was doing nothing. I was an innocent bystander." He said, "I've, I've got my wife and my children at home. Sire, I'm innocent." He asked another, he said, ah, "Why are you here?" "Oh," he said, "it was a, a villous scheme." He said, "There were those who lied on me." He said, "I have been framed." He said, "I have been lied against. I've been liabled." And he said, "I have been accused of committing a, a crimes against the king. And, sire, you are my king. I pledge to you my loyalty. I would never do such a thing." "Oh," said the king, "that's terrible. That breaks my heart." He asked another, he said, "Why are you here?" The man wouldn't even lift his head. He said, "Sire, I'm paying the just debt that my sins have incurred. I have sinned against God. I've sinned against my king. I've sinned against my countrymen. I have been a wicked and a vile sinner, and I am suffering the just reward of my sin." When the king heard that, he said, "You nave, you rascal, you thief, you malevolent person. What are you doing here in the midst of so many honest men? Guards, release him and let him go."

Because you say you see, your sin remains. And as long as we say, "Lord, I'm 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."

Conclusion

Friend, listen. It takes more than light. It takes sight. Would you say, "Dear God, I'll be honest enough to admit that my spiritual blindness?" And would you say, "Jesus, You are the light of the world. And, Lord Jesus, You're the only one who can open my blind eyes. And, Lord Jesus, as You opened this man's eyes so long ago physically, open my eyes that I might see." Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. No one stirring. Friend, I beg you, I beg you. No one stirring. No one moving, please. The service is not over. I beg you in the name of Jesus to let Jesus come into your heart and open your blind eyes. Father, help many today to receive Christ. And if you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, "Oh God, I admit that I'm a sinner. I admit that I have been born blind. And except I be born again, I cannot see. Lord Jesus, You're the only one who can open my blinded eyes. Help me, Lord Jesus. Save me today. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me today. And help me, Lord Jesus, to make it public. In Your name I pray, amen.

A Time of Terror and a Word of Hope

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 16, 2001

Main Scripture Text: John 10:10

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

JOHN 10:10

Outline

Introduction

- I. Recognize the Ultimate Reason for This Time of Terror
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 - D. Days of Stunning Violence
- II. Remember the Ultimate Reason for a Word of Hope
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Conclusion

- A. It’s a Time to Trust
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- C. It’s a Time to Repent
- D. It’s a Time to Speak
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Introduction

Find in God’s Word John chapter 10, and, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading at verse 10.

A few weeks ago, I went to New York City. I wanted to visit the World Trade Center. I did. I stood in that plaza and looked up at that towering tower, two of them, gleaming with glass and steel, and, as I did, my jaw almost fell to my chest. I gave a gasp at the monumental magnificence of the work of men’s hands. And yet, a few days later, I, as you, turned on television, and watched those towers crumble to ruin and dust, and we, as a nation, looked into the very face of evil.

September 11, 2001 will go down as one of, if not the, bloodiest day in American history. Those towers that represented American ingenuity and business are gone. And the Pentagon, the very symbol of American strength, had a commandeered airplane to fly through it like it was a crate of eggs. And we've had to think. We've had to pray. We've had to reason as we watched fellow Americans run through ash-covered streets, fleeing for their very lives, and may God have mercy upon these who are still buried beneath a mountain of twisted steel.

Well, I want us to read God's Word, and I think one verse—just one verse—puts all of this into proper perspective—John 10, verse 10: “The thief cometh not but for to steal, to kill, and to destroy.” Jesus then said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly.”

I. Recognize the Ultimate Reason for This Time of Terror

Now, first of all, I want us to recognize the ultimate reason—the ultimate reason—for this time of terror. People are asking questions today. I've been interviewed by many, many radio and television companies and stations. One man asked me bluntly the first word, “Where was God when all of this was going on?” I said, “Friend, I'll tell you where God was not. God was not up in heaven pacing about, wringing his hands, saying, ‘What am I going to do?’ God is still on the throne.” Another asked this question: “Why did God do this?” May I tell you emphatically that God did not do this.

Satan is the ultimate terrorist. You say, “Osama bin Laden perhaps was behind it.” Well, we'll find that out in days to come. But who was behind him? We're not wrestling flesh and blood. Until we wake up, we'll never get a proper answer, because we'll never go to the heart of the problem. Jesus told us the heart of the problem in John 10, verse 10: “the thief...—and He's referring to Satan—the thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” There He's speaking of Satan himself.

Now, I want to say something else. This did not take God by surprise. God knows the wickedness of human hearts. Now, Satan could not have done this without men in compliance. And when God made human beings, God gave them the freedom of choice. And that's one of the greatest blessings and greatest dangers that we have. I've often told you that human beings are free to choose, they're not free not to choose, and they're not free to choose the consequences of their choice. And there are those who have collaborated with Satan. But it has not taken God by surprise.

Now, some people, dewy-eyed, and uninstructed in the Scriptures, think that sooner or later we are going to make this world a safe place, and there will be peace on earth, and we're going to do it by human ingenuity. And they think that the preaching of the gospel will do that. Now, I don't want to disillusion you, but I don't want you to have illusions. That is not the job given to the gospel.

The gospel was never given to save civilization from wreckage. Listen. The gospel is given to save men from the wreckage of civilization. And if you think for one moment that somehow we're going to bring in utopia by our own schemes and plans, you're wrong. To the contrary, listen to these scriptures—2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 1: "This know, in the last days, perilous times shall come." There are no ifs, ands, and buts about that. There's no stutter about that. There's no equivocation. "In the last days, perilous times shall come." This word is only used one other time in Scripture, and there it is translated "exceeding fierce." These are dangerous days, dangerous days. Things can happen like that, that overwhelm us.

Joyce and I had gone Tuesday morning for a walk. It was a beautiful morning. When we came in from the walk, we were told to tune in to the television, that the World Trade Center had been hit. Let me give you the first scripture that came to my mind—Revelation 18—Revelation 18, and begin reading in verse 17. Look at it: "For in one hour—for in one hour—so great riches is come to naught. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, what city is like unto this great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, alas, alas, that great city, wherein we were made rich, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!" Now, listen to this phrase: "For in one hour is she made desolate." This great city, in one hour, made desolate. How could it be? We feel so secure.

Now, this scripture that I just read to you is not talking about New York City. It's talking about the Babylon to come, but oh, how graphic it is; how it reminds us of how fragile we are. These twin towers, like the ancient tower of Babel, came crumbling down. The Pentagon, the symbol of the mightiest nation this world has ever known, and yet it was vulnerable. What I'm saying to you is that God did not cause this. Satan caused it. He could not have done it without the free choice of mankind. It did not take God by surprise. To the contrary, days like this are clearly prophesied.

Jesus said the last days are going to be like the days before the flood, what we call the time of Noah. Listen to what our Savior said in Matthew 24, beginning in verse 36. He's speaking of His Second Coming, and He says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." No one—listen—no one can set a date for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But God does tell us what the times will be like. Verse 37: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Two shall be in one field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, the other left. Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

Now, most of us feel that history, as we know it, is coming to a climax. What we've seen, I believe, are foreshocks and fore-gleams of Armageddon. And Jesus said, if you want to be able to read the signs of the times, go back in the Scripture and see what it was like in the days of Noah before God destroyed the world with a flood, for God says, “as it was, so shall it be.” May I give you the marks of Noah's day, and I want you to answer to yourself, and see if they line up with our day.

A. **Days of Secular Philosophy**

First of all, the time of Noah's day was a day of secular philosophy. They were days of secular philosophy. Now, there are three chapters that tell us about the days of Noah—Genesis chapters 4, 5 and 6. And, in Genesis chapter 6, verse 5, the Bible says, in the days of Noah, “and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Now, the word imagination there does not mean daydreams; it means philosophies. It comes from a Hebrew root which means to fashion something as someone would fashion a vessel. And commenting on this, Dr. John Phillips said, “Men fashioned wicked philosophies and espoused wicked causes, made fashionable vile sins and endeavored to pour society into their mold.” There's more ungodly philosophy in the world and in America than ever before.

B. **Days of Scientific Progress**

But, secondly, not only were the days of Noah days of secular philosophy; they were days of scientific progress. As you read these chapters, Genesis chapters 4, 5, and 6, you'll find they were building great cities. You'll find they had smelting furnaces. They had great technological advance. For example, in Genesis 4, verse 17, the Bible says, “and Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he built a city...” And then, we read in Genesis 4:22: “and Zillah also bear Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.” The modern industry had come a long time ago in the days of Noah. And men were standing on their big feet, sticking out their big chest, and thumping themselves on the chest, and saying, “look what we have done.” And the same thing has happened in our nation and in our world. We're so proud of our inventions, our genetic engineering, our experimentation, our moving towards a cashless society, our virtual reality, our instant communication, the worldwide net, but for the first time, man is afraid of what he knows. The Bible says, in the last days, knowledge shall increase, and men shall rush to and fro.

C. **Days of Sexual Immorality**

Thirdly, the days of Noah were days of sexual immorality. They were days of sexual immorality. Genesis 4, verse 19: “And Lamech took unto him two wives...” Now, God’s plan had been one man for one woman till death do them part. Genesis 6:12: “and God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” And Jesus said, in the scripture that I read to you in the New Testament, they were marrying and giving in marriage. Exegetes tell us this speaks of a multiplicity of marriages. And Jesus said the days of Noah and the days of Lot are the same. That is, He linked the days of Lot with the days of Noah. Luke chapter 17, verse 26—listen to it: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.” Now, listen to this: “Likewise, also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, the builded; but the same day Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” God left Sodom, with its smoking ruins, as a reminder to this generation.

What does God do with a generation that lives in sexual immorality? Does God step in to judge them? To the contrary, God leaves them alone, and they judge themselves. The Bible says, in Romans 1, verse 26: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” Romans 1, verse 28: “and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.” And one of the worst things that God could do to any generation is just to turn them over to their sins.

And next, the days of Noah were days of selfish indifference. Everybody was having a party. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, in the face of coming judgment. Ezekiel 16, verse 49, tells about Sodom likewise: “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister, Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me; therefore, I took them away as I saw good.” America has been living in prosperity, soaked with sin, and oblivious to the needs of so many. I can imagine the people of Noah’s day, the men of Noah’s day, the men of Lot’s day asked this question, “Do you think we’re in trouble? Do you think perhaps judgment will come?” And one would shrug, and say, “No, as a matter of fact, we’re prospering quite well.”

D. **Days of Stunning Violence**

But now, let’s sum it up, and say this. The stunning mark of Noah’s day was violence. It

was stunning violence. The days of Noah were days of stunning violence. Now, listen to this—Genesis chapter 6, verses 11 and following: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” Our age, like the time of Noah, is an age of violence, skyjacking, kidnappings, guerilla warfare, needless murder, terror, stalk the streets of every major city in this world. Organized crime may be a bigger business than the United States government. And in this day there was a terrorist. His name was Lamech. Genesis chapter 4, verse 23: “And Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.” That is, I got in a battle; I killed a man, but he wounded me.” And then, this man says bitterly, “If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.” He said, “I’m going to take 77 lives for the thing that has happened to me.” Here was a man who’d been hurt, and he became a violent terrorist. And in America we are seeing what the Scripture says, when it says, in John chapter 10, “the thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.”

Now, the question is this: If God did not cause this, who caused it? Men caused it. Could God have prohibited it? Obviously, He could have; obviously, He didn’t. So God did not cause it, but God allowed it. Why did God allow it? He could have stopped it. So, evidently, in His wisdom, He had some reason to at least allow it. Let me ask it another way.

Why has this God-blessed America of ours been so God-blessed? Why is it that the pestilence and the terror and the war that has reached other shores not reached ours? May I tell you that America has been blessed of God. No other nation had such a Christian beginning as America. I say that again—listen to me now: no other nation ever had such a Christian beginning as America.

When our forefathers came, the pilgrim fathers, they came, they wrote that little Mayflower Compact underneath the decks of that Mayflower, and they said their stated purpose to coming to these shores was for the glory of God and the propagation of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And God put a hedge around this country. Did you know that in the Bible there’s a doctrine of hedges, that God can put hedges around people and individuals and nations? Let me give you an example.

God had put a hedge around a man named Job. Satan tried to get to Job, but God would not allow it. Job chapter 1, verses 9 and 10: “Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, doth Job fear God for naught?—or for nothing—Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast

blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.” Satan said, “I’ve been trying to get at this man. I can’t get at him.” Satan tried, but there was a hedge about Job.

The same was true of ancient Israel. Isaiah 5, verses 1 through 5: “Now, will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved—speaking of God—hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein, and looked at it, that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard than that I have done in it?”

God said, “I took this nation Israel. I planted them. I made a vineyard. I did all that I could do for them.” Now, notice this: “Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And now, go to. I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.”

Now, God had put a hedge around this nation. But He said, “I gave them all they needed. I blessed them with prosperity, and I looked for fruit; what did I get but wild grapes. I’ll take down the hedge.”

May I tell you why America has been so strong? America’s first line of defense has not been the military, but God Himself—God Himself. But we have politely told God to take His hedge and go back to heaven. We’ve told God, with the aid of the ACLU and others, “there’s no room for You here in this land. Take Your hedge, take Your prayers, take Your commandments, and we’ll handle it ourselves.”

As a matter of fact, the Supreme Court of the United States of America said it’s wrong for little children to begin their school day with this prayer. Here was the prayer that was ruled illegal in the United States on June 17, 1963. Are you ready for it? Little children praying: Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country. You can’t do that in America! Out! This is the One who has built a hedge around us, Almighty God, the One who has protected us.

Well, you say, “You know, if we mention God in the classroom, and people have the freedom to pray or carry their Bibles, somebody might be offended.” May I tell you, there’s nothing in the Constitution that keeps people from being offended. And our children are offended—our children are offended—every day by hearing God’s name blasphemed and hearing ungodly, rock music, and rap, that glorifies violence, hearing dirty words in the classroom. Our children are offended by this blasphemy and filthy speech. Why is it that blasphemy and filthy speech is protected, and praise and truth is

not?

Now, what I'm trying to say is this: We must remember the reason for the problems that we have. The Bible says that it is the work of Satan. Satan comes—the thief comes—to steal and to kill and to destroy. Human beings can be in compliance with Satan, but he is the master terrorist.

II. Remember the Ultimate Reason for a Word of Hope

Second point: We must also remember the ultimate reason for a word of hope. I'm grateful that John 10:10 has such balance. Jesus said, "the thief comes not to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life and have it abundantly." Our Savior is not the author of death but of life.

I saw the Commercial Appeal the next morning after this tragedy, and there in bold, black, somber headlines "Evil Acts—Evil Acts"—the very face of evil. Well, take evil, and spell it backward—L-I-V-E—live. Jesus came that we might live, not die. Satan comes that we might die and not live. "The thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come," Jesus said, "that you might have life, and have it abundantly."

Our nation has been shaken to her knees, but, my beloved, I want to tell you there are some things that cannot be shaken. I want you to look at this scripture in Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 25. God is speaking. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."

Now, we have a choice—we have a choice. God is speaking—God is speaking. God is shouting. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more—now, listen to this—signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made..." You took this mighty tower that we made, and God shook it, and it fell, or God allowed it to be shaken, and it fell. But now, notice this; notice the wherefore—and every time you see a wherefore, you ask yourself, what is it there for? "Wherefore, we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved—that's just another word for shaken—let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire."

Now, there are things that can be shaken. Everything that man makes can be shaken. It's premature rubble. May I mention three things that cannot be shaken.

A. God's Kingdom Cannot Be Shaken

God's kingdom that cannot be shaken. Look in verse 28: "a kingdom which cannot be moved." I'm telling you, there's a kingdom that cannot be shaken. I had a meal one time with Corrie Ten Boom. I decided to talk very little, and to listen. One thing she said I'll never forget. She said, "There's no panic in heaven, only plans." No panic in heaven,

only plans. There's a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

I've read of some sailors who were in shipwreck in a stormy sea. They didn't know which direction land was. It was nighttime. And then, the clouds opened, and one sailor looked through and saw the North Star. When he saw that North Star, he said, "Now, I know the direction to the shore." And they manned the oars, and began to pull in the direction of the shore. And then, one sailor said, "Keep your eye on that star, for if we lose sight of it, we're gone." Well, friend, I tell you there is a star in the heavens. It is God himself, and it cannot fall.

B. God's Word Cannot Be Shaken

Secondly, not only is God's kingdom not able to be shaken; God's Word is not shaken. God's Word is not shaken. Look in verse 25: "hear Him that speaketh." Look in verse 26: "now He hath promised." Thank God. "Forever O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." I don't know about you, but when times like this come to me, I want to know, is there a word from God?

I'm not interested in what some philosopher, some politician, some scientist, or some mathematician, has to say about it; I want to know what does God say. And I've often said, there are three categories in the world today: those who are afraid, those who are not afraid, and those who don't know enough to be afraid, and those who know their Bibles. God's kingdom can't be shaken. God's Word cannot be shaken.

C. God's Grace Cannot Be Shaken

And God's grace cannot be shaken. Look in verse 28. He says, therefore, "let us have grace." Let us have grace, infinite grace, never shaken.

There are two other twin towers. One is faith; the other is hope, and they stand on the foundation of the grace of God. I want to tell you that our God is a loving God. Our God wants to forgive. Our God wants to heal this land. And I thank God that we can stand on God's grace, and as we sing, the soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not, desert to its foes; that soul, tho' all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

Conclusion

I come to a conclusion. What should we do? What time is it? God's alarm clock has gone off. What time is it? May I mention some things that we ought to do. I'll run through them, six of them, very quickly.

A. It's a Time to Trust

Number one: it's a time to trust—it's a time to trust. Trust God. He will see you through. Your anchor will hold. The Scripture says, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." There's no panic in heaven, Corrie Ten Boom said, only plans.

B. It's a Time to Love

Number two: It's a time to love—it's a time to love. Don't let your heart become headquarters for hate. Let this terrible wickedness be the dark velvet upon which the diamond of God's love can be seen. This is an opportunity for us to show what pure religion is, to show what the grace of God is.

Now, here are people who, in the name of their religion—in the name of their religion—are slaughtering innocent human beings, with blood and mayhem, unimaginable brutality and horror. Let that be the dark background for the love of God.

Our faith is not the faith of the sword, nor coercion. And if you have neighbors, if you have Arab neighbors, Muslim neighbors, who are not compliant with this, who do not agree with this, go to them, share the love of Jesus with them, and share the love of Jesus with everybody, whether they be Jew or gentile, Muslim, Arab, white, black. This is a time for a mighty baptism of love. No faith, no religion, that's built on mayhem and murder is of God. "The thief comes but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." Jesus has come that we might have life.

Now, you say, "Pastor Rogers, do you mean that there's not to be any military action?" Oh, there must be military action; there must be. That's why God gave us government. God told us that, as individuals, we're to love. And God says, "Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." That's our job. That's our duty as the church, as Christians.

But in the very next chapter, God says—this is Romans 13, verses 3 and 4: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Rulers ought to be a terror to terrorists. "Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he—the ruler—is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Tonight, I'm going to preach on what the Bible has to say about war. What? How can a believer countenance war, or could he, or should he? Are we to be pacifists? No. But as individuals, we are to show love.

C. It's a Time to Repent

Number three: it is a time to repent. Now, I'm telling you, all the prayer in the world is not going to do any good, unless we repent. Joshua was faced with a little ignominious city name Ai in his conquest of Canaan. And Joshua was having victory after victory till he came to little Ai.

They didn't pray over Ai. As a matter of fact, there was sin in the camp. But they

sallied forth to war against Ai with a handful of troops, and this little insignificant nation brought great devastation to the people of God. Joshua got on his face before God, began to pray. And he said, “O God, why did You allow this?” And God said, “Joshua, get up. Israel has sinned. Deal with the sin, Joshua.”

What was he saying? That you cannot use prayer as a smokescreen to hide your sin. Now, we can pray and pray and pray, but, “If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways...” Do you think we can ask God to bless the filth, the debauchery, the immorality, the mayhem against the unborn? Say, “Now, God bless all of that.” No. We, as a nation, must repent. It’s time to repent.

D. It’s a Time to Speak

Next, it’s time to speak. We need to speak out. We need to speak up. As the night grows darker, the saints need to grow brighter. May I tell you something else? All of this was based on a philosophy, and idea, that belched up out of the hearts of wicked and violent men. It first started in their heads. They got a concept, they had an idea, they had a distortion, and then they acted it out.

Listen to me. You cannot kill an idea with a bomb. You cannot shoot it down with a bullet. The only thing that will overcome an idea is a better idea—a better idea—and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Would to God we had pulpits across America aflame with righteousness, opening the Word of God, and saying, “Thus saith the Lord—thus saith the Lord.” Would to God in our neighborhoods we would share the love of Jesus, that we would live the truth, tell the truth, speak the truth, believe the truth, love the truth. Truth is greater than error. It’s a time to speak.

E. It’s a Time to Unite

Next, it’s a time to unite—a time to unite. Let me tell you something. I’m getting a little weary of hyphenated Americans, Americans with a prefix. I’m this kind of an American; I’m that kind of American. Let’s just be Americans, and love one another, and respect one another, and give one another the freedom to believe what they want to believe. We’re not trying to coerce anybody, but let’s come together. Yamamoto, that Admiral who led the Japanese against Pearl Harbor so long ago, Admiral Yamamoto said this: “I had intended to deal a fatal blow to the American fleet by attacking Pearl Harbor. I fear that all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve.” And I believe these men have done exactly the same thing. I believe they have awakened a sleeping giant. We’ll never all be alike, look alike, act alike, or believe alike, but let’s unite our hearts, and stand against this evil.

F. **It's a Time to Pray**

Last of all, it is a time to pray. Gather your family and pray. Gather your neighbors and pray. Go to your schools and pray. Go to your classes and pray. Let us pray and pray and pray that God's kingdom will come, and God's will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

I want us to stand and salute the flag of the United States of America. And here it is. Place your hand over your heart and salute with me. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. May we sing, God bless America.

God bless America, land that I love; Stand beside her and guide her; Through the night with the light from above; From the mountains to the prairies; To the oceans white with foam; God bless America, my home sweet home; God bless America, my home sweet home.

Now, we're going to give an invitation. If you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ, you've never trusted Him as your personal Lord and Savior, you need to do so. The best thing you can do for you, for your family, for your city, for your nation, and for your world, is give your heart to Jesus. Not to say, "my country, right or wrong," but to say, "O God, I'm the one that's wrong. Be my God. I give you my heart, my soul, my life." If you would like to give your heart to Jesus Christ, and trust Him as your Lord and Savior, I want you to leave your seat and come forward, and tell the minister, "I want to be saved." We'll have prayer with you, and seal it in prayer, and God will save you today. I don't mean that you're going to get an emotional feeling. You may or you may not. I don't mean that you're going to sprout wings and get a halo. You'll have to grow as a Christian. But Christ will come into your heart. Your sin will be forgiven. Heaven will be your home. He'll never leave you nor forsake you. The only reason that you can be saved like this is because Jesus died for your sins on the cross and paid your sin debt. You can receive that gift today and be saved. Others of you need a church home. You need to get your family in church and Sunday school. Maybe you're new to our community. Maybe you've lived here, but you've been out of fellowship. You need to come and say, "We want to place our membership here," and go to work. If not here, some church somewhere that preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. You step out and come as we sing.

Abundant Living Through Abundant Liberty

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 23, 1992

Main Scripture Text: John 10:10; 11:14–44; 12:1–10

“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

JOHN 11:44

Outline

Introduction

- A. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Disappointment
- B. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Doubt
- C. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Disability
- D. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Desire
- E. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Despair
- F. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Darkness
- G. Jesus Is God’s Answer to Man’s Death
- I. There Must Be Life from Jesus
 - A. A Good Example Won’t Raise a Dead Man
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 - C. Environment Won’t Raise a Dead Man
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- II. There Must Be Liberty Through Christ
- III. There Must Be Loyalty to Christ
- IV. There Must Be Love for Christ

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word, and turn to the Gospel of John. And, we’re going to continue our theme of this morning, “abundant living.” Now, this morning, we talked to you about abundant living through abundant giving; and tonight, abundant living through abundant liberty. John 10 and verse 10: Jesus said, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”*—*“I [have] come that they might have life, and...have [abundant life].”* (John 10:10)

Now, as you study the Gospel of John, you're going to find out that the Gospel of John tells the story of seven miracles. These miracles are called in the Gospel of John "signs," *semeion*. That is, they're not mere miracles; they are miracles with a message. They literally happened, but behind each of these miracles is a message to show that Jesus is God's answer to man's need.

A. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Disappointment

For example, the first of the miracles is where Jesus turned the water into wine in John chapter 2. Don't turn to any of these, but let me just rehearse them with you. You see, there was a party, and the refreshment ran out. There was disappointment. And, Jesus became the life of the party, and Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointment.

B. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Doubt

Then, in the next miracle, there was a man who had a child who was very sick, and he asked Jesus to come and heal the child. And, Jesus said, "*Except [you] see signs and [miracles you'll] not believe,*" (John 4:48) and Jesus said this man's problem was his faith. So, not only is Jesus God's answer to man's disappointment; He's God's answer to man's doubt. And, Jesus performed the miracle.

C. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Disability

Then, there was a man who had lain at the pool of Bethesda, and he'd been there totally paralyzed—nothing he could do to help himself. And, Jesus healed him. Jesus is God's answer to man's disability.

D. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Desire

And then, the Lord Jesus Christ is there meeting the hungers of man's heart. He feeds the multitudes with a little lad's lunch. Jesus is God's answer to man's hungers, man's desires.

E. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Despair

And then, Jesus is walking on the water. They're afraid they're going to be drowned, and Jesus is showing what looks like is going to be over their head is already under His feet. Jesus is God's answer to man's despair.

F. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Darkness

Then, Jesus opens the eyes of a man born blind, and Jesus is God's answer to man's darkness.

G. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Death

Now, all of these miracles really happened, but they have a greater spiritual impact. When Jesus fed the multitudes, He said, "*I am the bread of life.*" (John 6:35) When He opened the blind man's eyes, He said, "*I am the light of the world.*" (John 9:5) And so,

Jesus, who is God's answer to man's discouragement, man's doubt, man's disability, man's desires, man's despair, man's darkness, climaxes now all of these miracles with the seventh, the greatest, and that is the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead to show that Jesus is God's answer to man's death.

Now, we're talking about life. Jesus did not come to bring death; Jesus came to bring life. And so, begin reading now in John chapter 11, and look with me in verse 14. Now remember, He said in chapter 10 that He has come that we might have life. (John 10:10) And now, He's going to illustrate it with a miracle. John 11, verse 14: *"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad"*—aren't you glad it doesn't end there? Lazarus is dead, and I'm glad. But, just keep on reading. That's the reason you need to read all of a verse of Scripture—*"[And] Jesus said unto them...Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent [that] ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us...go, that we may died with him"*—friend, you don't die with Jesus; you live with Jesus. That's what He's coming to teach—*"[And] when Jesus came, he found that he"*—that is, Lazarus—*"had lain the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother"*—now, they had a brother named Lazarus, and he had died—*"Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus"*—and I just think she wags her finger in His face, and she says—*"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"*—now, here's the key to this whole passage; look at it in verse 25—*"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* (John 11:14–26)

Now, I want us to learn here the key to the abundant life that our Lord teaches right here in this particular passage. And, if you would have an abundant life, let me tell you what you must do.

I. There Must Be Life from Jesus

First of all, you must receive life from Jesus. Do you have it? You must receive life from Jesus. Now, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He's only giving this as an illustration of the greater spiritual life that you and I must have, and you must receive that life from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Lazarus is dead. May I say, dear friend, there was really only one thing wrong

with Lazarus: he was dead. And so, since there was only one thing wrong with him, there was nothing right with him. May I say to you that how many things that you think may be right with you, if you're not saved, there's one thing wrong with you that makes everything else wrong with you that you may think is right with you? You are "*dead in trespasses and sins.*" (Ephesians 2:1)

You see, I preached a funeral this past Friday for a dear friend and brother in Christ, a comrade, Bill Harrison. Bill's body was right down there. Many people came to hear me who were dead, and Bill wasn't. Bill wasn't dead. Jesus said, "*[He that lives] and [believes] in me shall never die.*" (John 11:26) Bill Harrison—it was impossible for him to die. But, a lot of dead people were here at the funeral, but they didn't think they were dead; they thought he was dead. But, he wasn't dead. He's kicking gold dust on the streets of glory. He wasn't dead, but a lot of dead people were here at the funeral, saying, "Poor Bill. He is dead."

Now look, if you will, in verse 26 of this chapter: "*whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*" (John 11:26) My friend, it is possible to be physically alive and spiritually dead or to be spiritually alive and physically dead.

Now, perhaps you are a young lady here today—you've never given your heart to Jesus. You're saying, "Don't tell me I'm dead. I'm having a big time. This is life." Let me tell you what the Bible says about you, dear young lady. First Timothy chapter 5, verse 6: "*she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives].*" (1 Timothy 5:6) You, lady, are a zombie. "*She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives].*" (1 Timothy 5:6) Maybe I'm talking to a wheeler-dealer businessman here tonight. You say, "Well, man, I'm feeling good. All my corpuscles are operating just right. I've got vim, vigor, and vitality." May I tell you, my dear friend, you are dead? Listen to what God's Word says about you in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18: "*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*" (Ephesians 4:18) You are alienated from the life of God.

When we were little boys, we had some chickens, and my brother and I had the duty of going out there and decapitating the chickens before mamma would cook them. Have you ever decapitated a chicken? Have you? It's quite an experience. You know, the strange thing about a chicken—when you take its head off, he just keeps on flopping. My brother and I used to talk and say, "That chicken's dead, but he doesn't know it." I mean, he would just keep on going. And, if you've never done that, one of these days, you ask for the privilege, and you'll see what I'm talking about. Takes a chicken that's dead for quite a while for him to figure out what's happened to him, and that's what God is saying to a lot of people who are active but they are dead.

You know, in the Bible, Jesus raised three from the dead. If you remember your Bible history, Lazarus wasn't the only one. Jesus raised a little girl from the dead. Jesus

raised a young man from the dead, and Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Now, the little girl who died still had the bloom of life on her cheeks. Jesus walked into her bedroom and said, “Sweetheart, wake up.” That’s what He really said: “Little darling, arise.” That’s what He said: “Get up, darling.” She yawned and woke up. She’s dead, but Jesus raised her. Now, she just recently died.

Then, there was a young man who died. They were going to his funeral, so he was dead. Rigor mortis had set in, but he wasn’t like Lazarus. Lazarus, who was dead four days—he had not been embalmed. Already, putrefaction had begun. There was the odor, the foul stench, of death upon Lazarus—but not on this young man recently dead. Jesus raised him from the dead. We see that picture sometime in Living Pictures, where they do those miracles. It’s always a thrill, Jim. Do it again some time; I like it. And, that boy is raised up from that funeral pallet as they’re taking him to the funeral. Jesus broke up every funeral He ever attended.

Then, He raised Lazarus—He raised Lazarus. Now, Lazarus was a man. The other was a youth. The other was a little girl. One had just recently died. The other had been dead, but the putrefaction had not set in. The other had the stench of death upon him. Question: Which one was the most dead? Friend, dead is dead. And, it took as much of the power of God to raise that little girl as it did Lazarus, and never forget it.

Sunday morning, when a little child walks down here and gives his or her heart to Jesus Christ and gets saved, it takes as much of the grace of God to save that little girl as it does some man with the stench of death upon him—some man living in vile, desperate immorality. Dead is dead, my dear friend, so it’s time that dead people stopped comparing themselves to one another, isn’t it? You say, “Well, you’re more dead than I am.” Oh, no. Friend, listen, dead is dead. There are degrees of corruption but not degrees of deadness. And, if you would have liberty, first of all, you must have life from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, look in verse 38; look at it here, and see what happens: *“Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus [said] unto her, Said I not unto thee...if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? [And] 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. And when he [had] thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth.”* (John 11:38–44) Hallelujah!

Now folks, how do you raise a dead man? How do you raise the dead? Well, let me

tell you several things that won't work.

A. **A Good Example Won't Raise a Dead Man**

Number one: a good example. If you put a dead man in a room with a lot of live people and let all those live people walk around him, see if that will bring him to life. You know, there are a lot of people who think, "Well, people are saved by an example." I hear people say, "Oh, you know, I just want to be an example so people will see my life and come to Jesus." Friend, listen, *they're not saved by your life; they're saved by His death*. And, salvation is not following an example. Salvation is not even the example of Christ. Salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ, but it is receiving life from the death of Christ.

B. **Encouragement Won't Raise a Dead Man**

Well, example won't work. I'll tell you another way that we might try to raise a dead man: we might just encourage him. We could just come, you know, to the casket and say, "Come on now, get up. We know you can do it. Come on. Try harder and get up." Now, there are a lot of folks who are just trying to encourage the dead to have life. But, example is not the answer. Encouragement is not the answer.

C. **Environment Won't Raise a Dead Man**

Perhaps environment is the answer. "Let's put him in the healthiest environment possible. Take him to a health spa. Maybe a good environment—maybe that will give him life." And, you say, "No, pastor, that won't give him life, either." And, by the way, there are a lot of people who think that environment is the answer to the world's problems. I want to remind you that man first died in the Garden of Eden. You won't have a better environment than that. So, example is not the answer. Encouragement is not the answer. Environment is not the answer.

D. **Education Won't Raise a Dead Man**

Somebody says, "Well, you know the real answer. Here's the way you raise a dead man: education. Give him twenty lessons on life." You can't educate a man into the kingdom of heaven. Education is not the answer.

It took a miracle. Verse 38 says that Jesus groaned. (John 11:38) He's the compassionate Christ. Verses 39–42 said, "Jesus said, Father, I know that you hear me." (John 11:39–42) He's the confident Christ. And, verses 43–44, He calls Lazarus from the grave. (John 11:43–44) He is the conquering Christ.

E. **Only the Word of God Will Raise a Dead Man**

But now, how are the dead raised? Well, look again, if you will, in verse 43. It's very, very important that you see this because, you see, all of this is an example to us as the Church, showing how to give life to those who are spiritually dead. The miracle has a

message. So, look, if you will, in verse 43: *“And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”* (John 11:43) What was it that brought Lazarus forth? The Word of Jesus Christ. Don’t miss that—the Word of Jesus Christ. He said, *“Lazarus, come forth.”* (John 11:43) And, he was resurrected by a word.

“Well,” you say, “what good does that do me? That was Jesus.” Friend, learn what John is teaching in all of this. Jesus has already taught them in John chapter 6 and verse 63 this lesson: He says, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”—“they are life.”* (John 6:63) You see, I can call forth the dead because I have the words of Jesus Christ. Jesus has given me words, and Jesus has given you words to say to those in the stench of death and corruption, “Come forth.” And, that’s the reason the Apostle Paul says in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 16 that you and I are *“holding forth the word of”—what?—“life.”* (Philippians 2:16) It’s the Word of life.

I’ve often wondered, did Lazarus have a choice? Boy, we could get in a big debate about that. And, if you know the answer, you tell me later, but don’t tell me now. I don’t think you know. But anyway, did Lazarus have a choice? *“Lazarus, come forth.”* (John 11:43) I don’t know, but I know that you have a choice: you can hear the voice of the Son of God and say “no” if you want. You can refuse. You can stay in the stench and the rottenness and the grave of death if you want.

But, how do you raise the dead? Not by example, not by encouragement, not by environment, not by education, but through the Word of Christ. *“The words that I speak unto you, they are [truth], and they are life.”* (John 6:63) Number one: You must have life through Christ or from Christ.

II. There Must Be Liberty Through Christ

Number two: You must have liberty through Christ. Look, if you will now, in verse 44 of this same chapter: *“And he that was dead came forth”—but look—“bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”* (John 11:44) Now, he has life, but he doesn’t have liberty. You know, it’s good when you read the Bible to let your imagination work a little bit. Can you imagine: I mean, you’re there. Just imagine that you’re there in Bethany. I’ve been to Bethany many times. We’ve been to the place that’s purported to be the tomb of Lazarus. I’ve been down in this very tomb. As a matter of fact, I scared one of our members half to death in that grave one time. I was down there—and you go down a long way—and I just hid myself back in the shadows and said, “Boo.” I don’t know what... She received not life, but she almost went during that time.

But anyway, down in that place is this dark, labyrinthine place where Lazarus lay. And, they said, “Roll away the stone.” And, after protestations, they rolled away the stone. Jesus says, “All right, Lazarus. Come out of there. Come forth.” (John 11:43) I

can tell you one thing: every eye was riveted on the mouth of that grave. And, after a while, a figure comes out, but he's bound in grave clothes. He is an animated mummy. I mean, his face—there's, the Bible says, a "napkin," (John 11:44) but it's a winding cloth. It's all around him, all around his face. His hands are down by his side. His feet are bound together. He's coming out like this. He can hardly walk. He can hardly talk. He can hardly move his hands. He has life, but he doesn't have liberty. And, you see, my dear friend, what I want you to learn tonight is Jesus said, "[I've] come that [you] might have life, and...have it"—what?—"abundantly," (John 10:10) see. Our Lord doesn't want you just to have life; our Lord wants you to have abundant life. He doesn't want you to be wrapped in the grave clothes of that old life. Now, the problem with many of our folks is they've been saved, but they don't have liberty. I mean, they have come to Calvary for pardon, but they've never been to Pentecost for power. They've just kind of bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost.

Here's old Laz. He can't walk. He can't talk. I'm sure he's not very attractive. He wouldn't have made a very good witness. I can see Lazarus in the grave clothes with a black Bible under his arm, witnessing. I don't think I'd want to have anything to do with that guy, and I don't think you would, either. He has the grave clothes. Has it been that he has not be saved? No, he's been saved, but he has the grave clothes.

You know, James talks about "*the superfluity of naughtiness.*" (James 1:21) That sounds like something Sidlow Baxter would say—doesn't it?—"the superfluity of naughtiness." What is the superfluity of naughtiness? Well, the word *superfluity* means "that which remains," "that which is left over"—what we would call "hangover sins" when you get saved. You can be saved; you can have life, but you still have the grave clothes—the grave clothes of that old language. You know, some people, when they get saved, they lose about half their vocabulary, don't they? They've got another half they still need to lose. Old language, old lust, old laziness, old learning, old loves—they have to be taken away; they have to be stripped away. And friend, a lot of us are saved, but we have the grave clothes of the old life that keep us from having abundant life.

Now, here's the news: number one, you must have life in Christ; number two, you must have liberty from Christ. And, Jesus says, "*Loose him, and let him go.*" (John 11:44) By now, my dear friend, I want to tell you this: the same Jesus that gives us life, by a corresponding miracle, gives us liberty. There are three miracles: the miracle of the new birth, the miracle of the Christian life, and the miracle of our resurrection. Our salvation begins with a miracle, continues with a miracle, commences with a miracle. I mean, it's a miracle all the way. He doesn't just save us and then just turn us loose. My dear friend, He breaks the power of cancelled sin. He sets the prisoner free. Jesus Christ did not call you from the grave to leave you bound and gagged and defeated. Look in John 8:32. All of this is bound together. Look, if you will. Jesus said, "[You] shall

know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) The same word that gives life gives liberty. Look, if you will, in verse 36: *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, [you] shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:36)

Now, you say, “Adrian, do you have power to raise the dead?” I do—I do. His Word gives life. I hold forth the Word of life. I’m talking to those who are dead in trespasses and sin. “Do you have power to unwrap the saints?” I do. Jesus said to those who were standing by, *“Loose him, and let him go.”* (John 11:44) That’s the job of the Church—not only to get them baptized but to get them unwrapped.

Last Sunday night, I talked to a man in the visitor’s reception, and I said, “We’re glad to have you.” He said, “I was won to Jesus.” I said, “How?” He said, “The EE team came into my home and led me to the Jesus.” I said, “That’s wonderful.” I said, “What do you do?” He said, “I’m a bartender.” I thought, “Lord, unwrap him”—“Lord, unwrap him.” But, that thrilled me—that thrilled me. You say, “What’s he doing in there—a bartender?” He needs to be unwrapped. I said, “Well, you know, you’ve got to get another job, don’t you?” He said, “Yes, I do.” I said, “That’s wonderful”—“that’s wonderful.” See, it’s our job not to condemn them; it’s our job just to help unwrap them and to bring them to Christ. I mean, that’s his life. That’s what he knew. Thank God somebody cared enough to win a bartender to Jesus Christ—a fine young man.

And, by the way, some of you here tonight may have something worse in your heart than tending bar. Don’t look down your long nose, my dear friend. Maybe that young man is here tonight. And, God loves him, and we love him. You see, there’s liberty in Christ—there’s liberty in Christ. I thank God for those who helped unwrap me because I had a lot wrapped around me, friend. I still think I’ve got a few layers of gauze. Maybe you do, too.

III. There Must Be Loyalty to Christ

So now, listen—listen. First of all, if you would have abundant life, there’s life in Christ; there’s liberty through Christ, and, my dear friend, there must be loyalty to Christ. Now, continue to read here. Look in chapter 12, if you will, and look in verses 9 and 10: the Bible says, *“Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there”—*who was there? Lazarus was there—*“and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.”* (John 12:9) Every now and then, somebody says, “Hey, I don’t believe you ought to have testimonies. You ought not to have folks stand up there giving testimonies about what they used to be and what they are now. Just focus on Jesus.” Well, friend, there are a lot of folks who will come to see a Lazarus who won’t come to hear about Jesus until there’s a Lazarus out there, you see. But, when they find out what’s happened to a Lazarus, they might want the Lord Jesus Christ, also.

Look at it again now—verses 9 and 10; chapter 12, verses 9 and 10. They came to see Lazarus. I mean, that's the guy who was dead. Everybody knew it. *“But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.”* (John 12:10) Now, isn't that a hoot? I mean, Lazarus is dead. They say, “Kill him again! Kill him again! How are we going to get rid of this guy?” Listen, they had Lazarus on their hands. And, you talk about a man that was a problem—he was dangerous. Now, you see, listen, Satan doesn't worry much about the average Christian. You know why? Well, he's still messing around down there in the tomb even if he's saved. He's still got the relics of the old life, still got the stench of death on him, still got the old grave clothes on him. But, you let a man have liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ, and, my dear friend, all the power of hell is going to be loosed on you because you give hell headaches.

You see, the great thing about it was that the life that Lazarus had—are you listening?—was irrefutable evidence of the power of Jesus Christ—irrefutable evidence. May I say to you that the best argument for Christianity and the best argument against Christianity is the life of a Christian? Wouldn't you agree? It all depends on how he lives. *The best argument for Christianity or the best argument against Christianity is the life of a Christian.*

Years ago in Fort Pierce, Florida—I used to pastor down there just out of seminary. I pastored the Parkview Baptist Church there—and in Fort Pierce, there was a town drunk. His name was Al Cross. Al was the town drunk. Now, I mean, he was what you call not an “alcoholic”—a drunk! Al would manage to stay sober through the week until he would get his paycheck. And then, he would go put his paycheck on the counter and drink 'til he fell off the stool. And, they would shove him up in one of the fruit packing houses there, and he'd sleep with the lice and the vermin, and so forth, and wake up in his own vomit, and so forth, and finally clean up and get back to work. He lived this way for years. God gave me the privilege of leading Al Cross to Jesus Christ. And friend, I want to tell you that the Word of God brought him from the grave of that old life and the Word of God unwrapped him. He became one of the most beautiful Christian men I have ever seen—the sweetest, most godly testimony. I baptized Al Cross. And, Al Cross, from the time he got saved and got unwrapped, was a soul winner, bringing people to Jesus Christ. The change in him was so radical and so dramatic everybody knew that spiritually, he'd been raised from the dead.

Well, we would meet every morning. I had a radio program at 6:45 called “Daybreak.” And, many times I would do that radio program live, and then at 7:00 I'd go and meet with the fellows at the church and we'd have prayer. There'd be about a half a dozen—sometimes more, sometimes less. We'd meet each morning for prayer. Among those was Al Cross. We got to talking about how we might have revival in our city, and someone said, “Well, I have learned that the way to have a revival in the city is to get

the meanest man in the city saved.” Well, that sounded like a good idea. So, we thought to ourselves, “Well, now, who is the meanest man in Fort Pierce, Florida?” So, we held a caucus, and a lot of people were discussed. But finally, the consensus was upon a particular man.

Now, this man was a gun fighter. This man was a street brawler. This man was a moonshiner. This man was a notorious gambler. This man was a wife abuser. This man was wild, wooly, and reckless. On one occasion, he stole a hog out of the back of the game warden’s truck. At this particular time, he had a bullet in his hip that the doctor was not yet ready to remove. That bullet had been put in his hip by a woman who was not his wife, but that woman was jealous that he was spending too much time with his own wife so she shot him. And, that’s, you know... You get the idea of the character of this guy. And so, he won. I mean, you know, he was the unanimous choice—the meanest man in town. And, everybody was a little bit afraid of him because he was the kind of a guy who’d knock you down if he didn’t like the way you parted your hair. And so, we prayed, and they said, “Well, we’ll soak him in prayer. We’ll soak him in prayer, and we’ll soak him in prayer. And then, the preacher will go see him.”

So, the time came for me to go see this guy. And so, I remembered going to the house, and boy, my heart was going *bang, bang, bang*. But, I walked up to the door of that house and knocked on the door, and his wife came out. And, I said, “Is Mr. So-and-so there?” She said, “Well, he’s here.” He said, “They’re in the backroom fighting, drinking, and gambling.” I said, “Can I see him?” She said, “Mister, I wouldn’t go back there,” and I didn’t—chicken. She said—no, in all seriousness—she said, “You don’t need to go back there. Don’t go back there.” Well, I waited a while, and I figured I’d chicken out.

So, I went back to see him again. This time, he was in the hospital. God arranged that because we prayed and God arranged the circumstances. I’ll never forget it. I walked in there, and I said to this man—I figured I’d not beat around the bush—I said, “Mr. So-and-so, I am Adrian Rogers. I have come to talk to you about Jesus Christ and your eternal salvation. May I tell you about Jesus? May I share Christ with you?” Do you know what he said to me? He said to me, “If Jesus Christ could do for me what he’s done for Al Cross, I want Him to do it.” And, my friend, that man that I was so afraid of—it was like leading an eight-year-old girl to Jesus Christ. He fell off in my hands like a ripe apple, prayed, and gave his heart to Jesus Christ, and was saved again—the meanest man in town. But, I’ll tell you what it was that convicted him: it was a Lazarus who had come out of the grave, a man named Al Cross. And friend, you see, there’s no way to explain Al Cross. There was no way to explain him apart from Jesus Christ. He was irrefutable proof of the power of Jesus Christ.

And so, that’s the reason that these Pharisees wanted to get rid of old Laz. I mean,

they could not explain him away so they thought they'd try to blow him away. I mean, they wanted to get rid of Lazarus. Now, do you think Lazarus was frightened? Think about it. They said, "Hey, let's kill him." (John 12:10) Do you think Lazarus was afraid? Friend, how could he be afraid when Jesus has already raised him from the dead? I mean, you talk about a man who laughed at death! You talk about a man who smiled in the face of death! That just made him all the more dangerous. You see, *nobody is ready to live until he's no longer afraid to die*. And, those people who truly, truly, truly know the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be intimidated by Satan.

So, how do you have abundant life? Life in Christ, liberty through Christ, loyalty to Jesus. I mean, people say, "There's somebody who's different. There's somebody who has a life that has been touched and has been changed." You see, my dear friend, we are to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. But, not only should we be witnesses; we ought to be part of the evidence—we ought to be part of the evidence.

IV. There Must Be Love for Christ

Last of all, let me say that there's one other thing about Lazarus that I like. And, if you'll go back now to chapter 12 and verse 1: "*Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. [And] there they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.*" (John 12:1–2) Can you imagine that? Here's Lazarus, raised from the dead. They're sitting there, and Martha is serving. Mary is there just looking in the face of Jesus, I imagine. Lazarus is sitting at the table dining with the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't that wonderful? You see, listen, there are people who think that, when you come to Jesus, that people are inviting you to a funeral. They're not inviting you to a funeral. From a funeral to a feast, from the tomb to the table, there is Lazarus sitting there at the table with Jesus.

You remember what Revelation chapter 3:20 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*"—do what?—"and...sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) Salvation is a feast. Salvation is knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. Life in Christ, liberty through Christ, loyalty to Christ, and, my dear friend, love for Christ. That's the abundant life—love for Christ, fellowship, feasting with Jesus Christ. And friend, I'm feasting day by day. I find myself in my car just saying, "Jesus, I love you. I praise you, Lord. I bless you. Thank you, Jesus. Praise your holy name." Every day is a feast feeding on Jesus, feeding on manna, fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ. And friend, that's life, and that's life abundant.

Conclusion

Maybe you're here tonight and you wonder, "Could Jesus Christ really save me? I mean, could He really save me?"

Well, someone has imagined this: someone has imagined that man—remember that man that was brought on the stretcher to Jesus? The Bible says he was carried by four. (Mark 2:3) Remember the man they let down through the roof? You remember that story? Just nod your head. Go ahead. I'm asking questions; you're sitting there like a cigar-store Indian. Now listen, he's brought on a stretcher, and the man is paralyzed. And, they say, "Look, we're going to take you to Jesus," and he says, "No." He said, "That's no good." He said, "He can't help me. I'm too far gone." And, one of those men may have said, "Look, once I was blind, and Jesus opened my blinded eyes." And, that man, paralyzed, said, "Well, yes, I'll admit that you were blind and He opened your blinded eyes. But, you see, I'm paralyzed all over. It's more than my eyes." And, another man says, "But look, let us take you to Jesus. I was deaf, and Jesus unstopped my deaf ear." And, he said, "Oh yes, I know that. But, you see, that's just your ears. I'm paralyzed all over." Another says, "Look, let us take you to Jesus. Once I had a withered arm, and Jesus made it whole." He said, "Yes, that's good, but that's just your arm. I'm paralyzed all over." Then, another steps up and says, "Sir, may I give you my testimony? My name is Lazarus"—"Hello, my name is Lazarus." Friend, why is this miracle the last of these miracles? To show that whatever you need, Jesus Christ is the answer. "*I [have] come that they might have life, and...have it...abundantly.*" (John 10:10) Abundant life, abundant liberty. Life from Christ, liberty in Christ, loyalty to Christ, love for Christ.

It's so great to be saved, to know Jesus. Do you know Him? You can. He is saying to you, "Come forth. Come forth. I'll give you life and liberty, and we'll sit down and dine together."

Father, I pray that many tonight will say "yes" to Christ and be saved. In His wonderful name. Amen.

How to Be Sure You Are Eternally Secure, Part One

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 12, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 10:27–29

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

JOHN 10:28

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Introduction

Find in God’s Word John chapter 10. And when you have found it, look up here. And in just a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 27. Let me ask you a question. Is there something even more wonderful than knowing that you can be saved? Yes, there is. It is knowing that you can be saved and being certain that you’re saved. Well, is there anything more wonderful than knowing that you can be saved and knowing that you can be certain that you are saved? Yes, there is. And what is it? It is knowing that you’re saved, knowing that you can be certain that you’re saved, and knowing that once you’re saved and certain you’re saved, you can also know that you can never ever lose

your salvation.

Now I want to talk to you today about this subject: “How to Be Sure You Are Eternally Secure.” Listen to the Scripture, God’s Word—John chapter 10, verse 27. 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. 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)

Now we’re not talking about something that is incidental this morning. We’re talking about something that is fundamental when we’re talking about the eternal security of the believer—how you can know that you are eternally secure.

A. **Eternal Security Is Necessary for Spiritual Health**

It is necessary for your spiritual health.

¶ Can you imagine what the emotional state of any child would be if that child did not know from day to day whether or not he or she were a member of the family? “Today, I was a good boy: I’m a member of the family. The next day, I wasn’t so good: I’m no longer a member of the family. I am loved of my father. I am not loved of my father. I am received in the family. I am not received in the family.” Friend, that would make a person a neurotic for a child to grow up and not to know he is accepted in the family. He may be punished. Yes, indeed, he may have to go up to his room. But he or she knows that they know that they are a part of the family. It is necessary for emotional strength in the natural world.¶

And so it is in the spiritual world. These people who do not know that they’re saved and secure do not have the emotional stability, in my estimation, that a child of God ought to have.

B. **Eternal Security Is Necessary for Spiritual Productivity**

I’ll tell you another reason why it is so important that you understand this: It is important if you’re going to be a productive, fruit-bearing Christian. When you know that your future is secure, then you can concentrate on the present.

¶ In 1937, they built that marvelous bridge that many of us have seen, the Golden Gate Bridge. I can remember very vividly the first time I saw that monumental structure, as they began to build what at that time was the world’s longest suspension bridge. But as they built it, they built it very high above those swirling, perilous waters. Many of the workers were afraid that they might fall, and it seemed like the very fear of falling is what caused them to fall. Though they spent seventy-seven million dollars on this bridge, at first they failed to build a safety net when they were building the bridge, and twenty-three people on the first section of the bridge fell—fell into the water and perished. On the next section of the bridge, they spent 100,000 dollars to build a safety net. Now

100,000 dollars back in that time was a monumental sum. But they felt it was worth it, and so they built a safety net under the workers on the next section of the bridge. After they built the safety net on the next section, only ten fell. But every one of the ten that fell was caught and was safe; the lives were not lost. But here's the point: With the safety net there, the work went twenty-five percent faster. The people could concentrate on their work, because they knew that beneath them was a safety net. ¶

And so it is with the child of God. When he knows that his future is secure, he can concentrate on the present.

C. Eternal Security Is Necessary for Soul Winning

Now I'll tell you another reason why what I'm talking about today is very, very important: not only for your spiritual health, and your spiritual productivity, but to help you in evangelism and in soul winning. Do you know why a good number of people never get saved? Very frankly, they are afraid they'll not be able to hold out. They think, you know, "Maybe someone like these other people, someone like these others, are able to do it; but I'm just not able. I don't have the strength. I don't have the wisdom. I don't have the knowledge. I don't have the willpower. I don't have what it takes. And rather than go down there and make a false start and then fall away, I just won't go at all." Many people feel that way. There are some of you who are sitting here this morning who really, in your heart of hearts, want to be saved, but you're just fearful. You're fearful that you'll make a false start and then you will fall away. Oh, if we could only teach people what the Bible has to say about the fact that the God who saves you is the God who secures you. He is the God that keeps you. He has saved me and kept me. And I can tell you truly that the God who saved me is the God who will save you, and the God who has kept me is the God that will keep you.

Now, what do we mean when we're talking about the eternal security of the believer? Well, first of all, let's talk about what we mean when we say "the believer." We're not talking about someone who just has head knowledge. We're not talking about someone who has joined a church and been baptized and gives his money and does religious things. That's all well and good, but none of these, nor all of these, can save. We're talking about a person who has received Christ into his heart by faith, who has become a partaker of the divine nature, who has been twice born, who has received the new birth. This person can never ever, ever again be a lost soul.

"Well," you say, "now, wait a minute, Pastor. That causes me a problem. I know of some people who once were saved and now they are no longer saved." Be careful when you say that, because you may have thought that you knew that they were saved, but they never truly were saved. Do you remember the scripture there in Matthew chapter 7, verses 22 and 23, where Jesus was talking about the Judgment and He said,

“Many will say to 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 Jesus said, *“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity?”* (Matthew 7:22–23) Now, listen. He didn’t say, “I once knew you, and you lost it.” He said, *“I never knew you.”* “You may have prophesied. You may have thought that you cast out devils and did many wonderful works. But I never knew you.”

Now we’re not talking about people who professed to be religious and turned away. We’re not talking about those. We are talking about people who have truly received the Lord Jesus. Remember the scripture that I read to you just a few moments ago? 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. 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)

You say, “Well, Pastor, what about these people who join a church and get baptized and live for God a while and then go away? Are you telling me that they were never saved?” Yes, that’s what I’m telling you. If they go away and stay away, they were never saved. And John tells us about them. And put this verse in your margin. As a matter of fact, get out a piece of paper and put it down. We’re going to give you so many verses. I want you to jot them down. But in 1 John 2 and verse 19, John explains those who start for a while and then fall away, and this is what John says. Now, listen to it carefully. First John 2, verse 19—listen to it: *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”* (1 John 2:19) Now that’s 1 John 2, verse 19. *“They went out from us, but they were not of us;”—*John said—*“for if they had been of us, they would...have continued with us.”* The reason that they fell away is they were never truly saved. Right out here we put it this way: *The faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first.*

Now that’s it. People who make a false start and then fall away, they didn’t lose their salvation; they never had it. Judas never lost his salvation. Judas was never saved. The Bible says that Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas did not believe in Him. (John 6:64) So when we’re talking about eternal security, we’re not talking about eternal security for people who have never been saved. We’re talking about eternal security for people who have had a personal, vital relationship with God through Christ.

Now, let me give you some reasons why and how you can know that you are eternally secure. Get a piece of paper and jot them down. I’m going to give you eight reasons, and I’m going to let every one of them begin with the letter *p* so you can’t forget it.

I. Promise

The very first is the word *promise*. God has promised to you eternal security. Turn to Romans chapter 8, if you will, and look with me in verses 38 and 39. Now Paul says, “Here’s something I am absolutely certain of. Here’s something that I am persuaded of.” Listen to it: “*For I am persuaded*”—that means “I have a deep conviction”—“*that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,*”—and in case he left anything out—“*nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:38–39) Now if you can think of something that the Apostle Paul left out of that statement that might separate you from God—if you can think of anything—you come tell me and I’ll give you a free two-week, all-expense-paid vacation, airfare included, to Hawaii.

Now what I’m trying to say is this, folks. And just challenge me if you want to. Listen. Paul has given a list of ten mighty opponents that cannot separate you from the love of God. He says, “Death can’t do it”—if you die, you’re still in the love of God. “Life can’t do it”—if you still live, you’re still in the love of God. “Angels can’t do it, good angels and bad angels”—Satan is an angel, a fallen angel. “Principalities”—that means “kingdoms”—“can’t do it.” “Powers”—that means “authorities”—“can’t do it”—you name the authority. And then he says, “things present”—anything that happens, anything that is in the world today. And then he says, “things to come”—anything that may ever be created, anything that may ever come into being. “Height”—that means anything in heaven above. “Depth”—that means anything in hell beneath. And just in case he didn’t cover all the bases, he says, “nor any other creature”—anything else. I mean, so he just covers the bases. He is saying, “I promise you there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God.” And if we went no further than that, just the promise, that’s the first reason.

II. Perseverance

Here is the second reason, the second *p*: not only *promise*, but *perseverance*. If you can spell it, write it down. God will complete what He has begun. Now, take your Bibles and find Philippians chapter 1, and you’re going to find a wonderful, wonderful verse—Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. Here again Paul says, “Here’s something I know for certain.” He begins this verse with this phrase “*being confident.*” He began the last verse by saying, “*I am persuaded.*” He begins this one by saying, “*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” (Philippians 1:6)

Now when you got saved, who began the good work in you? Was it you, or God? It was God. “*We love him,*”—why?—“*because he first loved us.*” (1 John 4:19) “He began

the good work in us.” He was the One who called us.

Now the Holy Spirit of God is the agent of the new birth, and let me tell you what the Holy Spirit is.

A. **The Holy Spirit Is the Convicter**

First of all, He is the Convicter. He was the One who convicted you of sin. He was the One who showed you that you were a sinner and needed to be saved.

B. **The Holy Spirit Is the Converter**

Not only was He the Convicter; He was the Converter. He was the One who opened your eyes. He was the One who helped you to understand the gospel. He was the One who put faith in your heart and helped you to receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. **The Holy Spirit Is the Completer**

He is the Convicter and the Converter. And listen, my friend. He is also the Completer. *“He which hath begun a good work in you”*—the Convicter and the Converter—*“will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6) Have you ever started anything you weren’t able to finish? I’ve started many things I haven’t been able to finish. But Jesus has never started anything He is not able to finish. God the Father has never started anything He is not able to finish. The Holy Spirit has never started anything He is not able to finish.

✠ I heard that Billy said to Jimmy, “My dad has a list of men that he can whip. And, Jimmy, you need to know that your daddy’s name is on that list.” Jimmy went home and said, “Dad, I want to tell you something. Billy says that his daddy has a list of men that he can whip and your name is number one on the list.” Jimmy’s daddy went to see Billy’s daddy. He rolled up his sleeves and said, “I understand that you have a list of people that you can whip, and my name is number one on the list. Is that right?” He said, “Yeah, that’s right.” He said, “Well, you can’t do it. What are you going to do about it now?” He said, “Well, I’ll just take your name off the list.” ✠

I am so glad that God never has to take anybody’s name off the list. I’m so glad that God never starts anything He’s not able to finish, that the job is not too big for Him. Paul said, “I am confident of this thing: that He that has begun a good work in you will perform it.” You see, if any child of God—any of God’s elect—were to perish, that would mean that God the Father is defeated in His purpose. That means that God the Son is disappointed that His blood had no saving efficacy to keep. It would mean that God the Holy Spirit is disgraced because He is not able to complete that which He began. So—perseverance. Not the perseverance of the saints—it’s not the saints that persevere; it is the God of glory who is able to complete what He has begun.

III. Predestination

The third *p*—the first one, *promise*; the second, *perseverance*; the third one, *predestination*. Turn to Romans chapter 8 now and look with me beginning in verse 29. And I hope you're getting these verses down. But listen. The Bible says, "*For whom he did foreknow,*"—speaking of God—"*he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he*"—that is, God's Son—"*might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*" (Romans 8:29–30)

Now the Bible says that God foreknew certain ones, and when God foreknows those ones, then God predestines those ones. "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.*" Do you know what *predestinate* means? It means your destiny is already predetermined. God has predetermined your destiny. You cannot be more sure than predestined. If you are predestined to be in heaven, then you'll be in heaven. If you don't get to heaven, you were never predestined to be in heaven. God says that you are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. You couldn't be in hell and be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in these verses God gives you a chain with five golden links: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. If you're a child of God, God already sees you glorified; He already sees you in heaven. It doesn't say, "He will glorify." Look at that verse. He says you are already glorified. Do you see? Your salvation did not begin with you. Your salvation began before this world was swung into space. God saw you before He ever created this world, and God saw you glorified. God saw you in heaven. God knows the past, the present, and the future all at one time, and God sees you now predestined for heaven. God sees you now already in heaven. God sees you predestined to be like Jesus and already glorified. Now, tell me, what can stop that? What can hinder that? How could I ever lose my salvation, if I am already predestined to be like Him?

There was in West Palm Beach, Florida, a teenage boy. He didn't deserve to be saved. He had no merit of his own. He deserved to die and go to hell. But God foreknew that boy. God saw that boy. God looked at him. God saw that boy repenting of his sin. God saw that boy asking Jesus to save him. God saw that boy open his heart and receive the new birth. And God said, "It is predestined: Adrian Rogers is going to be like Jesus. It is predestined. It is settled. It is absolutely settled."

Now, could anything be more sure than to be predestined? Friend, what is settled in eternity cannot be undone in time, and what has been decreed by heaven cannot be annulled by hell. Say *amen*. Listen. In Romans 11 and verse 29, the Bible says, "*The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" (Romans 11:29) What does that

mean? Means God never changes His mind. *“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”* God foreknew, and God called. And God, oh, my dear friend, predetermined that I would be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Perfection

Now, here’s the fourth *p*, and I want you to write it down: not only *predestination*, but *perfection*. Turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 10. What a wonderful verse this is! I love this one. It may be my favorite of all of these verses—Hebrews 10, verse 14: *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* *“By one offering he”*—Jesus—*“hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14)

Now, what is that one offering? His precious blood poured out on Calvary’s cross. That one offering makes you perfect forever. *“For by one offering he hath perfected”*—for how long?—*“for ever.”* Learn this about salvation: when you get saved, you don’t just get a fresh start. God doesn’t say, “Well, I’m going to make the down payment, and you have to keep up the monthly installments.” Now that’s the way a lot of people believe salvation is. They believe that God just simply says, “All right, here’s a fresh start. I’m going to forgive your past, and I’m going to give you a fresh start. Here, I’ve made a down payment for you, and if you can keep up the monthly installments, if you can just keep on making deposits on your good account, then maybe you can get to heaven.” Oh, no. Listen. He paid it all the way through. *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* It is done. I mean, I am made perfect forever in God’s sight. I didn’t get a fresh start. Friend, I got a new nature.

Now, notice this: *“by one offering he hath perfected for ever.”* I want to give you a challenge: Find anywhere in the Bible where anybody was ever saved twice. You can’t do it. Do you know why? Because it is impossible to be saved twice. Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find where anybody is ever saved twice. These people who believe you can get saved and lose your salvation, they believe that you must be born again and again and again and again. They believe that you keep on getting saved. But no. *“By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* Did you know that in order for you to be saved twice, Jesus would have to die twice? I mean, when you got saved, you got a ticket marked “good for one salvation only.” You are perfected forever. Jesus is never going back to that cross. He i’s never going to die again. For by one offering we are perfected forever. And so—perfection.

“Well,” you say, “but wait a minute. You’re not perfect, Adrian.” I know I’m not perfect. Oh, that is true. In our flesh, we are not perfect. What are we talking about here? Somebody says, “What if you get saved and then you sin again?” Did I hear you say, “What if”? No. You see, we can disobey God. And if we do, He carries us to the woodshed. *“Whom the Lord loves he chastens.”* (Hebrews 12:6) And we’ll talk more

about that in another message.

But let me give you some Scripture here that talks about that perfection. Now I want you to watch this very carefully. And it's found in Romans chapter 4, and it's very important that you look at this. Romans chapter 4, and let's begin in verse 5: *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* You're not saved by doing good works. People who believe you can lose your salvation believe, many of them, that you lose it because your good works are not enough. *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."* (Romans 4:5–6) Isn't that wonderful?

Do you know what the word *impute* means? It means "to put that on your account." When you go to the store and you want to charge something, if you want to have a little fun with the clerk, don't say, "Charge it"; just say, "Impute it." It means the same thing. God imputes, or puts righteousness on, your account. Without works—not one scintilla of an iota of good things did you do in order to get saved.

Now so, that's a blessing. Yes, verse 6. But now, look in verse 7: *"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,"*—that's a blessing. Hallelujah! Every stain, every blemish, every blot, every blur is washed cleaner, whiter than snow. It is forgiven—*"and whose sins are covered."* (Romans 4:7) What does that mean? Not only does He forgive it; He won't bring it up again. It is gone, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Because we uncovered it, God covered it. Because we confessed it, God forgave it.

All right now, you say, "Could it get any better than that?" Yes, it does get better than that. Look in verse 8: *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* (Romans 4:8) Oh, hallelujah! Glory to God! Yes, blessed is the man to whom God imputes righteousness. Yes, blessed is the man forgiven. Yes, blessed is the man whose sin is covered. Hallelujah! But, *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* You see, one half of one sin would send me to hell forever. I mean, *I wouldn't trust*—you've heard me say this many times—*the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven.* But, *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* Why? *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."* Just put down *perfection.*

V. Position

All right now, let me give you the next *p*—and it is *position*. You are already positioned in the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17. I love this—2 Corinthians 5, verse 17: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation]: old things are passed away. behold, all things are become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17) Now

there's the old creation: that is Adam and his children. There's the new creation: that is Jesus and His children. Everybody is either in Adam, the old creation, or they are in Christ, the new creation. *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"*—a new creation. I am in the Lord Jesus Christ. What pertains to Jesus pertains to me. I lose my relationship with God the Father when Jesus Christ loses His—because I am in Christ. You see, what is true of Christ is true of me, because I am in Christ. I am not Christ, but I am in Christ. I'm a part of His Body. Somebody said, "What if you slip out of His hand?" Friend, I'm one of His fingers. I am in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it's illustrated in the Bible by Noah's Ark. Peter tells us that Noah's Ark is a picture of our salvation. Noah's Ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is more than just a story of a great ship. Now, remember how Noah was saved? Let's see how good you are on your Bible history. God said to Noah, "Noah, I'm going to destroy the world with a flood. But I don't want you to perish, Noah, and I don't want Mrs. Noah to perish, and I don't want Ham and Shem and Japheth to perish, and I don't want their wives to perish. All eight of you need to be saved. So, Noah, here's what to do. Put eight pegs on the outside of the ark; drive them in good and secure. When it starts to rain, get a stepladder. Get up there and get hold of those pegs, Noah, and hold on as best you can. And if you can hold on till the water goes down, Noah, you'll be safe."

Is that the way it happened? Please don't say yes. Is that the way it happened? No, that's not the way it happened. That's the way some people think salvation is. Oh, they believe that Jesus is like the ark, but rather than being on the inside, they're on the outside holding on. Have you ever been in a prayer meeting where anybody would say something like this: "You folks please pray for me that I'll hold out faithful to the end"? I can see Noah holding on to that slimy peg, saying, "Mrs. Noah, Mrs. Noah, please pray for me that I'll hold out faithful to the end." You know, Noah never would have made it. Not a one of them would have ever made it.

What happened? Listen. God brought them in the ark. *"If any man be in Christ..."* God brought them in the ark. In Genesis chapter 7, verse 1, the Bible says, *"And the LORD said unto Noah [and his family], Come thou...into the ark."* (Genesis 7:1) "Come in." Now when God said, "Come in," that meant that God was inside. Now if I'm in a room and I say, "Come in," I'm inside. If I am in a place and I say, "Go in," that means "you go where I am not." But if I say, "Come in," that means "you come where I am." God said in Genesis 7:1, *"Come...into the ark."* That means that God was in that ark and Noah was in that ark. And then the Bible says that God shut the door. (Genesis 7:16) Now, why did God shut the door? To shut the water out and to shut Noah in. God shut the door. It wasn't Noah that shut the door; it was God that shut the door. There was not a doorknob on the inside. The Bible says in the book of Ephesians, after we have believed, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. And so it was God that

shut Noah in that ark with Himself.

Now the only way that Noah could have gone down would be what? For the ark to go down. The only way for me to lose my salvation is for Jesus to go down, because, friend, I am in Christ. I am in the Lord Jesus. *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation].”* Now Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he never fell out of the ark. That’s the important thing. Sure, a Christian can slip and stumble and fall, but God shut Noah in. God shut the door. *“After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”* (Ephesians 1:13)

Now there are some people who have the idea that one day they’ll be secure, but they think that when they are secure is going to be when they get to heaven. They’re going to step into heaven, slam the door, and say, “Whew, boy, I made it! Hallelujah! I am safe. I’m now in heaven.” Wait a minute. What makes you think you’re going to be safe up there, if you’re not safe down here? The angels fell from heaven. You see, *security is not in a place; security is in a person, and His name is Jesus.* His name is Jesus. *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation].”* So—position. Just put it down: Your position is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. Possession

Now, here’s the next *p: possession*. You already have eternal life. Listen to this scripture: John 5 and verse 24. Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life”* (John 5:24)—not “will get it”; you have it. Everlasting life is not something you get when you die; everlasting life is something you get when you believe. Listen to the verse again: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.”* That means you’ve got it right now. You have it right now. You are eternally secure.

Now, suppose a man is saved for five years and then he loses his salvation. What did he have? Five-year life. Suppose he’s saved for ten years and could lose his salvation. What did he have? Ten-year life. But if a man has eternal life, if he ever loses it, whatever it was, it wasn’t eternal, right? He might have called it “eternal life.” Whatever you have, if you ever lose it, whatever it was, it wasn’t eternal. Jesus said that you have eternal life. Friend, that is your possession right now. You have eternal life. I wish I had more time to talk about that. But just know this, friend: that my eternal life will not begin when I die; my eternal life began the moment I received the Lord Jesus. *“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”* (1 John 5:12) *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word,”*—I’ve heard it—*“and believeth on him that sent me,”*—I believe on the God who sent His Son, the Lord Jesus—*“hath everlasting life.”* I have everlasting life.

VII. Prayer

Here's the seventh reason: *prayer*. Jesus is interceding for you. Jesus is praying for you. Turn to John chapter 17 for a moment. Jesus Christ is praying His great high priestly prayer, and Jesus is praying for His disciples. And this is what He prays for them in John chapter 17 and verse 9: "*I pray for them: I pray not for the world,*"—that is, the unsaved—"*but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*" (John 17:9) And then, what does He pray for them? Well, skip on down to verse 15 and you'll see what He prays for them. He says this: "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*" (John 17:15) Our Lord is saying, "Lord, Father, I'm not praying that they will escape tribulation and heartache and difficulty; not that you would take them out of the world; but, Father, my prayer is that you will keep them from evil." Hallelujah!

Now I want to ask you a question. Has Jesus Christ ever prayed a prayer that wasn't answered? Of course not! Why? Because He always prays in the will of God. And He said, "I thank you, Father, that you always hear me." (John 11:42) "Well," you say, "yes, but He was praying for Peter, James, and John." That's true. But now, go down to chapter 17 and verse 20, and Jesus said, "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*" (John 17:20) Isn't that wonderful? "I'm not just praying for Peter, James, and John, but I'm praying for Bob Sorrell and Bob Gallina. I'm praying for Adrian Rogers. I'm praying for Al Alexander. I am praying for those that will believe on me through their word." You can just put your name there. Friend, Jesus Christ has prayed for you that you will be kept.

Now, are you going to be kept? Of course! If you're not kept, His prayer is not answered. You remember that He said to Peter, "Peter, Satan has desired you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." (Luke 22:30–31) And it did not fail. Though Peter stumbled and fell, he was the mighty apostle of Pentecost. Why? Hebrews 7:25: "*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he*"—what?—"ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25) I have a Savior, a dear loving Savior. He is praying for me day by day by day by day, and night by night and night by night, and year by year and year by year, on the basis of His perfect sacrifice. That's the reason I am secure: prayer.

VIII. Power

The last is *power*. It's the last word. I want you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 1 and look at these verses. Listen to them. Oh, hallelujah! I love these. First Peter 1:3: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope*"—that means "a living hope"—"*by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not*

away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3–5) “Who are kept by the power of God.” Think of it—“kept by the power of God.” Do you see?

Somebody says, “But, Pastor Rogers, what if Satan were to take you out of the hand of God?” Remember the scripture we began with? *“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) Remember that? “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Can you think of a power strong enough to pry open the mighty hand of God and of the Lord Jesus? “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 10:29) You say, “But the word *man* is there. It doesn’t say that Satan can’t do it.” Well, friend, if you look at your Bible real carefully, the word *man* is italicized. That means it is only supplied by the translator to make it read more smoothly. What it literally says is, “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”*

Remember what Jesus said to Peter? “Peter, Satan has desired you. But I prayed for you.” (Luke 22:31–32) Now, question: If Jesus is not able to keep you; if Satan, indeed, is able to indeed pluck you out of the Father’s hand, why hasn’t he done it? Why hasn’t he done it, if he is able to do it? Let me tell you something, friend. The only reason he has not done it is because he can’t do it. If you think that Satan could take you out of the Father’s hand, and he hasn’t done it, then you know what the conclusion would have to be? Satan has been good to you, and now you are going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. Wouldn’t that be a strange doctrine—“Oh, he could; but he just hasn’t”?

“Well,” you say, “yeah, maybe Satan couldn’t take you out; but you could take yourself out.” Friend, John chapter 10, verses 27 and 28, says, *“And they shall never perish.” (John 10:28) That is in the middle voice. It literally means “they shall never destroy themselves.” Listen. If He didn’t save me from me, He didn’t save me from my worst enemy. “They shall never destroy themselves.” A dumb, stupid sheep has such a Savior, and that Savior will keep that dumb sheep. The power of God—“who are kept by the power of God”: that’s the reason we are eternally secure.*

Conclusion

Now, what does that have to do with you? There is somebody here today who needs to be saved. Let me just tell you, come and give your heart to Jesus, and the same God who has saved and kept me is the God who will save you and keep you, I promise. Better than that: He promises. And if you are saved, you ought to rejoice today and say, “Hallelujah! I’ve got a Savior, not a probation officer. Hallelujah! I’ve got a salvation, not just a down payment. Hallelujah! Thank God! I’m saved, and I am secure.” †

How to Be Sure You Are Eternally Secure, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 1, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 10:27–28

*“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

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

The title of our message tonight is “Eternal Security, Part 2.” I spoke to you this morning on “How to Be Sure You’re Secure.” And if you’re not saved and certain, then you need to get saved and certain. But if you are saved and certain, then, also, you’re saved, certain and secure. And just by way of review, do you remember the eight reasons I gave you? And in order to help you remember why a child of God who has been twice born, that’s the only kind of child of God there is, who’s been twice born, who has been regenerated, who has become a partaker of the divine nature. I gave you eight reasons why someone like this can never ever again be a lost soul. And I told you it’s so very important to your spiritual equilibrium that you not become a neurotic, that, you know, thank God you are saved, and no matter if you do fail and stumble, you’re still in the family. That’s good for your spiritual health.

We told you also it's good for your productivity. When your future is secure, you can concentrate on the present. And you remember the illustration about the Golden Gate Bridge. And then I told you also that it is necessary that we tell people about eternal security because that helps us in evangelism. So many people fail to give their heart to Christ because they just don't think they can stick it out. They don't think that they're going to be able to hang on and because of that they just fail to give their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ, afraid they'll make a false profession and then fall away.

And I gave you those eight reasons. Remember what they were? First of all, the promise of God. God clearly promises neither height, nor depth, nor angels, nor principalities—nothing can separate us from God—in Romans 8, verses 38 and 39. First of all, the promise, and then, we talked about the perseverance. Philippians 1:6—He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it. That God completes what He started. If God started with you, He's going to finish with you. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Then we talked about predestination. We are predestined, according to Romans 8, to be like the Lord Jesus. And if we're predestined, nothing can stop it. Then, we talked to you about perfection. By one offering forever we're made perfect in the sight of God. And then, we talked about our position and we said that we are in Christ Jesus. Just as Noah was in that ark, whatever happens to Christ, happens to us. We're a part of His body. For us to ever die eternally a part of the body of Christ would have to be amputated and severed from Him. And then we talked about our possession—that we now have eternal life. It's not something we're going to get; it's something we already have. When did you get eternal life? You got eternal life when you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. John 5:24—He that has the Son has life. It's not something I'm going to get. I got it the minute I received Jesus. Then we talked about the principle of prayer. Jesus is praying for us. He's interceding for us. In Hebrews 7:25, He's able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. He has prayed that we would be kept from the evil one. In John chapter 17, His prayers are always answered. And then, the last reason was power—the power of God. Peter says we are kept by the power of God. I can tell you, if I could keep any of my children from harm, I would. If I could, I would, but I'm only human. Sometimes I can't. But, friend, He can, and He will. We are kept by the power of God. It's not a matter of our holding on to God; it's the matter of God holding on to us.

So let's think about the other side, because I know there are some honest questions. Some people would say, yes, Pastor, that is true, but what about this? Or, what about that? Or, what about this scripture? Or, what about that scripture? Now, obviously, we can't deal with all of the scriptures that might tend to indicate otherwise, but may I say that we'll deal with a few of them, and perhaps they'll be illustrative of the rest. When

you look at a supposed contradiction in the Bible, then you have to find out that the contradiction is only in your mind. Maybe you've taken a text out of context, maybe you've not examined it carefully, and so we want to look at some of these texts, and find out what they really say that seem to indicate to some that we might be able to fall away.

I. Problem Passage #1: 2 Peter 2:20–21

For example, turn to 2 Peter, if you will. Let me give you a classic illustration that someone will bring up to you if you say that you believe in the eternal security of the believer—2 Peter chapter 2, in God's Word. And I'm going to begin reading in verse 20—and Peter says, "For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Someone says, there if it teaches that person can be saved and be lost again. Well, look if you will here at this scripture with me a little more carefully and I think you'll understand that it does not teach that a saved person can ever be lost again, but it teaches really just the opposite.

In verse 20, it says this: "For after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..." That is, here's a person who has been living in sin and they free themselves. They hear about Jesus. They say, that is the way to go. They turn over a new leaf, but they never receive, as we're going to show you, a new life. They have escaped the pollution of the world. It doesn't say they're saved. It doesn't say they're on their way to heaven. They have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is, they have heard the gospel. They know about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but they are again entangled therein. Now look at the word entangled. The word entangled literally means to weave something into a pattern. And what happens is this, that these people are weaving themselves deeper and deeper into bondage by following certain false teachers. And all that Peter is talking about here in 2 Peter hinges on the area and in the arena of false teachers. There are people who hear about Jesus but they hear from the lips of false teachers. They never really learn what it is to be saved—to be born again. And they get themselves meshed. They weave into their hearts and minds certain philosophies, certain false truths; they never know the gospel of grace. They get themselves deeper and deeper into bondage through false teachers. And when they do, they are worse off than they were before they ever even heard anything about Jesus.

Look in verse 21: “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”

Now here’s a principle—listen to it: Those who live by truth get more and more freedom. Those who do not live by truth, those who live by lies, experience more and more bondage. Now, here’s the statement: Reformation without transformation leads to greater degradation and final condemnation. *Reformation without transformation leads to greater degradation and final condemnation.* It’s better for you not to of known the way of truth than to reform your life without meeting the Lord Jesus Christ. The classic example of that is Judas. Jesus said of Judas, it had been better for him that he’d never been born. Judas heard the truth. Judas reformed his life. Judas was a disciple of the Lord Jesus. He escaped the pollution of the world for a while, but his latter end was worse than his first. Jesus said, it would have been better for him that he had never been born. Sinful desires do not disappear by reformation. They only hibernate and wake up stronger. That’s what Peter is saying. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of truth then after they’ve heard the holy commandment to turn from it. Salvation, on the other hand, gives you a new nature. Reformation doesn’t give you a new nature. It doesn’t change anything, and, in a moment, when we get to the illustration about the dog and the hog, it will be very, very clear to you.

Now, somebody says, well, you know, Pastor Rogers, if I believe what you preach this morning, if I believed in eternal security, I’d get saved and I’d sin all I want to after that, because I wouldn’t have to worry about it. I’d have a ticket to heaven. I could never lose my salvation, so I’d just get saved and then I’d have a blast. I’d just sin all I want to. Well, look up here and let me tell you something. I sin all I want to. Did you know that? I sin all I want to. I don’t want to. I don’t want to. I don’t want to sin. Nothing would make me happier than to know I would never sin again. If there’s some sort of a contract that I could sign to say that it’d be impossible from now on for you to sin I believe I’d sign it. I don’t want to sin. And if you have the idea that somehow eternal security is a license to sin, do you know your problem? You probably need to be saved. You see, you need to get your wanter fixed. No, you need a brand new wanter. You need to be born again. These people that Peter’s talking about had reformation but they never had regeneration.

And then he gives two classic examples, in case somebody thinks that he is talking about somebody who is saved and lost their salvation. He gives the example, and the example makes it so very, very clear. Example number one is the example of a dog. Example number two is an example of a hog. Now put this down big and plain and straight: God never called any of His children either a dog or a hog. Isn’t that right? A

sheep, but never a dog or a hog.

A. **The Example of the Dog**

And then, he gives the example of a dog who vomits, and then hates to leave a warm meal on the ground. And so he goes back to the sign of the crime, and he laps it up. You say, Pastor, that's disgusting. Peter wanted it to be disgusting. I mean, that's the reason Peter used that. I mean, that's Peter's illustration, not mine. I'm too cultured to use an illustration like that. That's Peter's illustration. Here's this dog who goes back to his vomit and eats it again. Now he has regurgitation but he doesn't have regeneration. There's something that upset his stomach, and he got rid of it. And when he regurgitated, he felt better. But he was still a dog. He felt better, but he was still a dog. He was not changed. Why did he go back to his vomit? Friend, that's a dog trick. Dogs are noted for that. And it's happened to him according to the true proverb: the dog has returned to his vomit.

B. **The Example of the Hog**

And then, the pig. Let's look at it again. Here Peter illustrates it. The dog is turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Now you can take a pig, a sow, scrub it till its pink. You can get some crest and a big brush and do the tushes. You can use some Right Guard, left guard, use everything you want—Chanel number 5. Get that pig very clean and put a big bow around its neck. But I'm going to tell you this about a pig—a pig will only stay clean so long. You know, it's only until the pig has an opportunity to go back to the mire, that the sow that is washed is going to return to the mire. Why? Because that is the natural habitat of a pig.

Now, Peter's a classic teacher here. The dog feels better; the pig looks better. The dog is cleaned out; the pig is cleaned up. But neither is changed. God never calls one of His children a hog nor a dog. Neither has been essentially or eternally changed. You remember the story of the prodigal son? Well have you ever the story of the prodigal pig? Now the story of the prodigal son is in the Bible, but the story of the prodigal pig is not. But I'm going to tell it to you. When the prodigal son was down in the hog pen—now, remember, this is a little Adrianology here—but when the prodigal son was down in the hog pen, the prodigal son said to himself, I'm sick and tired of this hog pen. I wasn't made to live here with these hogs. I will arise and go to my father. And one of the pigs said, what is that? He said, I'm going to go to my father. He said, what is your father? Oh, he said, my father's house is beautiful. He said, we've got servants, and my mother's a wonderful cook, and we live in a big house. I've got a place to bathe. I've got a bed. I'm going to arise and go to my father. And the pig says, hey, that sounds good. Mind if I go with you? The prodigal son says, no; said, come on, let's go. And so the prodigal son and the prodigal pig begin to go home together. Now you understand this

is not in the Bible, okay? This is just Adrianology. And so, the prodigal pig and the prodigal son, they go there, back to the father's house. And the father sees his son coming home, and he says, son, welcome home. Here, son, here's a robe; here's a ring; here's shoes; here's the fatted calf. We're going to have a wonderful time. Well, dad, I've brought a friend of mine with me. Here's a pig. He wants to come and live in our house. The dad says, okay, bring him in. And the prodigal son's mother says, wait a minute. He can't come in like this. He's got to take a bath. The pig says, what? He says, you've to be scrubbed. She says, you've got to be scrubbed. You can't come into my house, you filthy thing, like that. We've got to scrub you up. And so, this pig is scrubbed. And then, it says, we've got to teach you manners. You can't eat out of a trough anymore. You're going to have to tuck a napkin under your chin. You're going to have to sit at a table. You're going to have to use a knife and a fork. A what? A knife and a fork. We have manners here. You just can't stick your snout down and begin to eat. By the way, you can't go outside in the mire anymore, and in the mud. You can't lie down with the stench and the flies. You're going to sleep on a clean bed, but you're not going to sleep on my bed, unless you take a bath every night. How long you think that pig will do that? Well, for a while. And then, you know what the pig will say? Pig says, I just believe I will arise and go to my father. I am going to return home. I don't like it over there. Of course, he doesn't. He doesn't belong there. He belongs in the hog pen. The child of God doesn't belong in the hog pen; he belongs over there in the father's house. It's just that plain. It's just that simple. The sow that is washed is returned to the mire. Well, that's one scripture that someone would use, but just remember here that he's talking about reformation without regeneration. And reformation without regeneration makes a person worse off than they were before.

II. Problem Passage #2: Matthew 24:11

All right? Let's turn to another scripture. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 24 here. Here's another scripture the people will frequently use to try to prove that once we are saved, that we can lose our salvation. Matthew chapter 24 and verse 11: "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." And someone will put that verse under your nose, and say, don't you see it—that in order for you to be saved, you have to endure to the end? It's amazing how people get things 180 degrees out of focus. They say, in order for you to be saved, you have to endure to the end. But God teaches here that, in order for you to endure to the end, you have to be saved. That's all He's saying. You want to know who's saved? Those who endure are the ones who are saved. They're not saved because they endure. They endure because they are saved.

You see, endurance is the mark of reality in the life of a human soul. I've been saved now for over four decades, and I'm so grateful that I'm saved. I have endured. Do you think I'm saved because I endured? Of course not! Do you know why I have endured? Because God put something in my heart; because God worked a miracle in my life. And it's not that I've held on to Him; it's that He held on to me. There's a classic story about a father who was crossing the road with a son, and the traffic was pretty heavy, and so the father said to the little boy, son, hold on to daddy's hand, as they started to cross. And he gave his daddy his big index finger, which is a handful for a little boy's chubby fist. And the little boy got his daddy by the finger, and they started to cross the road. The dad saw the light change and he saw the oncoming traffic coming faster than he had anticipated. He took his finger out of the little boy's fist and put that little boy's hand in the middle of his hand and drug the little boy across the street with his toes just turned over, being drug across that way. When they got to the other side, the little fellow said, I held on, daddy. Now actually, it was the dad holding on to him. He that endures to the end—those are they that are saved. They do not endure in order to be saved. They endure because they are saved.

A. The Example of Simon Peter

Now, you can see that so wonderfully, if you'll turn to Luke chapter 22. Turn with me to Luke chapter 22—Luke 22 and verse 31: “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:” I remember the classic sermon that Ron Dunn preached here during our Bible conference. He said, I've got good news and bad news. He says the good news is that Satan can't do anything to you unless God allows him. That's the good news. The bad news is He does. God does allow Satan to do certain things to us. He allows Satan to sift us and so forth. And, if you don't have a copy of Ron Dunn's sermon that he preached, that I think it was Saturday morning, get that. That is a keeper. That's a classic message, one of the great messages that have been preached from this pulpit. Jesus says, Peter, Satan is on your trail. He wants to sift you as wheat. But notice verse 32: “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted...”—doesn't mean when he's saved. The word converted means, when you turned—“strengthen thy brethren.” That is, Peter, I am praying for you, and because I'm praying for you, your faith will not fail; you're going to endure. Now, and it's obvious that Peter did endure. Peter, who did tremble, Peter who was frightened. Peter, who did curse and swear and deny the Lord Jesus Christ, never ultimately forsook the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal security is like a strong rubber band that God puts around you when you get saved. You may stray away, but He just keeps drawing you back—He just keeps drawing you back, He just keeps drawing you back. That's the love of God, because He's prayed for Peter that his faith will not fail.

B. The Example of Judas

But there's another person in this same chapter, and that other person is Judas. Notice in chapter 22, verse 47: "And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" And here is Judas in this same chapter. Peter and Judas. Now folks, honestly, if you and I had been there that day and we had not known the background, we didn't know anything about anybody and before Peter denied Christ and before Judas betrayed Christ, if you'd put Simon Peter up there and put Judas up there and said, of course you don't know their hearts, but which one? If you just had to choose, if you just had to choose, which one would you say is saved? I dare say that almost everyone of us would say it's Judas and not Peter—almost every one of us. We'd just look at him and say, bound to be Judas; certainly not Peter. I mean, Peter was a mess. The only time Peter ever opened his mouth was just to change feet. He's always putting his foot in his mouth. He's always impetuous. He's always blustering. He's always this and that. We would have said, Peter, he's not saved, probably not—that big old fisherman. But now, Judas, we'd say, he's saved. Why do you think we would say that Judas was saved? Who do you make the treasurer? The person you trust the most. Isn't that right? The person you trust the most. Judas was the one who had the moneybag. Why, they trusted him. When Jesus said, one of you is going to betray me, none of them said, well, it must be Judas. None of them suspected Judas. Well, did Judas endure? Of course he didn't endure. He fell away. He betrayed the Lord Jesus, committed suicide, died, and went to hell.

But now, look, if you will, in John chapter 6; turn to John chapter 6. Just take your Bibles now, and look in John chapter 6 and verse 64—Jesus said, "But there are some of you that believe not." He's talking to those who are standing around Him. "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." Do you think it took Jesus by surprise? Do you think He said, what a revolting development this is? Oh no, how could I have chosen Judas? Wow, look—here's a man I was trusting, and now he's betrayed me. Oh no, friend. Jesus chose Judas with his eyes wide open. Jesus knew that Judas never believed in Him. Turn—look in this same 6 chapter—to verses 70 and 71. This is John 6, 70 and 71: "Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." Nothing got out of hand. Jesus said in another place, I've chosen Judas that the Scripture might be fulfilled. What's the point? The point is, Peter endured. Judas didn't. Why? Why did Peter endure to the end? And why did Judas not endure? Very simple. Peter had faith. Peter, I've prayed for you that your faith fail not.

Judas didn't have any. Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. Judas never believed. Simon Peter did. And he that endures to the end, those are they that are saved. And that's the reason for the scripture I gave you this morning from 1 John 2, verse 19, remember it? "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would not doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." And so, those who go away don't lose their salvation. Those who don't endure don't lose their salvation. Those who don't endure don't lose their salvation, because they fail to endure—they never had salvation.

III. Problem Passage #3: John 15:5

Well, let's turn to John 15, while we're in the book of John, and look at another passage here that some people would use to try to say that, once you're saved, you can lose your salvation. John chapter 15, and I'm going to read beginning in verse 5—Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." And you say, well, I think I can do a little bit. May I say, that's your opinion. Jesus said, you can't do anything without me. You know what that is? That's a zero with the edges trimmed off—nothing without me. And then, Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them—not him, them—and cast them into the fire and they are burned." If a man abide in me, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." And so, somebody says, well, here's a picture of somebody who was in Christ. They're cut away from Christ. They're thrown into the fire and they are burned.

May I tell you that the Lord Jesus here is not talking about salvation at all. He's talking about fruit bearing. Our Lord is using an illustration. He's using a metaphor, that we are to abide in the Lord Jesus, if we bear much fruit. Now, in a grapevine, the husbandman, the vinedresser, trims the grapevine. He takes the suckers, the limbs, the branches that don't bear fruit, he takes his pruning knife, he cuts them away. What do you do with a branch that's been cut off from the vine? Well, the wood is not good. You can't carve it. You can't warm a house with it. It just makes a brush pile, and you throw it in the brush pile, and you burn it. What our Lord is saying is this: if you don't abide in me, you're good for nothing—you're just good for nothing. You are a good-for-nothing Christian. He's not talking about heaven. He's not talking about hell. He's not taking about salvation. He's talking here about fruit-bearing. It's the same thing that the apostle Paul said: I don't want to become a castaway. I don't want to become a useless, good-for-nothing person. Never ever try to get theology from a metaphor. That's an

illustration. You get your theology from the epistles, not from some illustration, some parable, or some metaphor. There's a truth that's taught there, and the truth that's taught there is a very wonderful truth—that, if we're going to bear fruit, we need to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Problem Passage #4: Hebrews 6:4

Well, we've got time for just one more. Let's look in Hebrews chapter six. I saved this one for the last, because this is the one that I think so many people really want to go to, to try to prove, somehow, that we can lose our salvation. Hebrews chapter 6—I'm going to read beginning in verse 4. Here in Hebrews chapter 6, the writer of Hebrews is talking about an impossibility. He says something is impossible: "For it is impossible..." Now, let's find out what is impossible. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Then he gives an illustration: "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we speak thus."

All right, go back to verse four. Something is impossible. He says, it is impossible for a certain class of people, if they do a certain thing, to be renewed unto repentance. It is impossible. If they fall away, the Bible says, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. Now I say this: that, if you use Hebrews 6, beginning in verse 4, and following, if you use that to prove that a person can lose his or her salvation, for you, it proves too much—it proves too much. Because, what does it prove? It proves that if you were ever once saved and lost it, if that's the way you're using this verse it also proves that you can never be saved again. Isn't that right? If they fall away, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. So, if you don't believe in once saved, always saved, you have to believe in twice lost, always lost. You understand what I'm saying? He's saying, if you use this verse this way, if you try to make this verse prove that a person can be saved, lose their salvation; if that's what you're trying to prove with it; then go ahead and be honest. And say, once they do lose that salvation, they can never ever be saved again. For it is impossible to renew them to repentance. So, what's he talking about? He's not talking about people who have been saved. You say, Pastor, how do you know he's not talking about people who've been saved? Well, look in verse 9—look in verse 9: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany

salvation...” Do you see it? He’s not talking about saved people here. He’s talking about people who come to the very threshold of salvation and turn away. It’s impossible for these people who have done business with God, these people who know the truth and they turn from the truth with their eyes wide open—it’s impossible to bring them to repentance. They have committed the unpardonable sin. Look at them. They were once enlightened. The entrance of God’s Word gives light. Many people have sat in a service like this and been enlightened. They have tasted of the heavenly gift. We have preached, and we have sung, and they have heard about Jesus. They’re made partakers of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit of God has gripped their hearts. They’ve tasted the good Word of God. They’ve heard the Word expounded, and the powers of the world to come. They’ve tasted all of that, but then they turn away. If they shall fall away. Not a person who sins in ignorance, not a person who sins without understanding, but a person with his or her eyes wide open; says, no, I don’t want Jesus.

A. The Example of the Cheese

I’ll give you an illustration. You go to the supermarket, and back there in the meat section, the dairy products, there’s a table out there, and on that table, little squares of cheese. And each little square of cheese has a toothpick. And you go and pick up that cheese and taste it. And if you’re a cheese hound, you might say, hey, that is really terrific cheese; I want two pounds of that cheese. So they wrap up two pounds of that cheese, and you go to the checkout stand, and you’re watching as she drags that cheese over that little blipper. And you see a number come up there, and you say, ooh, wait a minute; what’s that? She says, that’s the cheese. You say, you’ve got to be kidding. That? You expect me to pay that much money for that cheese? She says, well, that’s a rare cheese. That’s imported cheese. That’s very expensive cheese. I thought you wanted it. You said, well, I thought I did too, but I didn’t know what it cost. Put it back. And she puts it back. Here’s an individual who has tasted it. He’s sniffed it. He knows what it is. He’s rolled it around on his tongue. He is aware of exactly what he is doing, but he says I will not pay that price, and he walks out. He refuses with his eyes wide open. And that’s his privilege.

B. The Example of the Wheat and the Thorns

Now, the writer of Hebrews gives an illustration. You know, I love the illustrations in the Bible that make it clear. Look, if you will, in verse 7: “For the earth which drinketh the rain that cometh oft upon it and bringeth forth herbs meets for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” All right now, here’s a plot of ground. Look up here, if you can. This side of the rug, we’re going to say, is

ground that has one kind of seed. Over here, away from the rug, we'll just say, is another piece of ground, and it has another kind of seed. Here's ground, and here's ground. Let's say there's a fence that goes between these two plots. All right, both of these get rain. God makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust. The rain falls, here and the rain falls there. Both of them get sunshine. The sun shines here, and the sun shines there. Both of them have the breezes that blow. The wind blows here, and the wind blows there. Over here on this side, there comes wonderful fruit. Over here on this side, there are thorns and briars. Same sun, same ground, same rain, same atmosphere, but there is a difference in what's on this side and what's on this side. What is the difference? The seed—the seed. Over here, thorns and briars. Over here is wheat, or good fruit, or whatever. Now, that's what he's talking about. There are individuals who can sit in an auditorium like this and hear the same sermon. They can hear. They can taste the good Word of God. The Holy Spirit of God works on both sides. And some hear, and say yes to Jesus. And some hear, and say no to Jesus. Some bring forth fruit, and herbs, vegetables. Others bring forth thorns and briars. And it all depends, not on the sun, not on the rain, not on the breezes, not even on the ground, but it depends upon the seed that's in the heart.

Now, let's give the illustration. What he's talking about—this book's called what? The book of Hebrews—Hebrews—it's written to Jews. And it's talking about Jews who were coming out of the old way, and now they're coming to the new way. They're coming out of the old dispensation, the Old Testament laws; they're coming to the new way. But many of these Jews, and many of these early disciples who came to the new way, they had to turn their back on the old way. And when they turned their back on the old way, they were persecuted, and many of them were put to death. And, very frankly, like the man at the checkout counter, they didn't want to pay the price. And so, they turned their back on the Lord Jesus Christ. They have tasted. They have ingested. They know. They've gone along with the Holy Ghost. They were in the synagogue. They've heard the Scriptures read. They've heard the apostles testify. They've seen the changed lives. They've seen it all. But the book of Hebrews is written to those who had a tendency to want to turn and go back into Judiasm, back into the old way. And so, here are two Jews. One who is a true believer—that's this side of the fence. One who is not a true believer—he's never truly been saved. He's had all of the influences, but he has never been saved. And someone comes along in authority and says, I see you two are followers of this Jesus of Nazareth. Is that true? This man says, yes, it is true. And this man says, yes, it is true. We're followers of Jesus. Well, he says, I just want you to know that if you persist in following this Jesus, you're going to be put to death. Do you understand that? This man over here who is a true believer says, well, if I die, I'll just have to die. You read Hebrews chapter 11, and many of them did die—the last part of

Hebrews chapter 11. If I have to die, I'll die. But I cannot deny the Lord Jesus Christ. This man over here says, hey, it's just religion. I mean, after all, there's nothing that keeps me from going back to the old way. The old way was pretty good. I will go back to the old way. But, don't kill me. And they say, how do we know you really mean it? We have a way to find out. They would take this man out to an unclean place, and there they would sacrifice a sow, a pig, and the blood of that pig would be on the ground. And they would say, spit on that blood, and say, I equate that with the blood of Jesus the Nazarene. Spit on it. Trample it under your feet, and say, that's what I think of the blood of Jesus. And you can come back to the old way. And he says, (spit) that's what I think of the blood of Jesus. And he goes back to the old way. But he knows what he's doing. He's just trying to save his skin. He has tasted. His eyes have been open. His eyes have been open. He's been enlightened. He's rolled it around on his tongue. But he will not pay the price. Do you know what he did when he did that? Friend, he committed the unpardonable sin. He's damned and on his way to hell. And it is impossible to renew him to repentance. Look at the Word of God—verse 6: “And if they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. And in another place, it says, they count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. And they have done despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Now, he's not talking about a person who was saved who does that. A saved person couldn't do that. I couldn't do that. You couldn't do that. A saved person couldn't do that. He's talking about an unsaved person, a person who has never been born again. You say, Pastor, how do you know? Verse 9: “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation...” Hebrews chapter 6 is not talking, in my estimation, about a saved person who was lost. If that is what you understand, then again I want you to say, be honest—if you don't believe in once saved, always saved, according to this verse, you'd have to believe in twice lost, always lost. Because he says, it is impossible to renew such a person to repentance.

Conclusion

Now, these are certainly not all of the verses. They're just some of the verses. Well, you say, Pastor Rogers, if that is true, then what about sin in the life of a child of God? Well, in our series of messages, “Back to the Basics,” we're going to deal very shortly with what happens when a child of God sins. God may carry him to the woodshed—not to prove that he's lost, but to prove that's he's saved. And, if you were to take this same book of Hebrews, and read chapter 12, you'd find out that it says, whom the Father loves, He chastens, and scourges every son He receives. My dad used to give me whippings, not because he didn't love me, but because he did love me; not because I

was not His child, but because I was His child. And, if ye receive chastisement where of all are partakers—all of true sons are partakers—then are ye sons and not illegitimate. That's what God is saying. We'll deal with that at another time. But now, let's just come back to the focus of the message this morning.

What does all of this mean to you? Well, if you're a child of God, do you know you're saved? Rejoice. Rest in His love, and out of gratitude, serve Him, and serve Him, and serve Him, because of such a wonderful salvation. 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. And, if you are saved, just sing it over and over again: Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Seven Reasons Why a Saved Person Cannot Be Lost

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 7, 1986

Main Scripture Text: John 10:27–29

Outline

Introduction

- I. Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God, Which Is in Christ Jesus
- II. When We Are Saved, We Are Made Perfect Forever
- III. Our Lord Always Finishes What He Begins
- IV. We Are Predestined to Be Like Jesus
- V. You Are in Christ
- VI. We Already Have Eternal Life
- VII. Our Lord Jesus Christ Is Ever Interceding for Us

Conclusion

Introduction

I told you that I wanted to give you seven reasons that a born-again child of God could never again be a lost soul, and I'm going to do it in twenty minutes or less—I promise you that. You can set your watches, and it'll be done tonight, because I just want to take the remainder of the time and just share with you. So you're going to have to listen in a hurry. But I want to give you these reasons—you can jot them down.

Now when I am talking about the security of the believer, I'm not talking about being a church member. I am talking about someone who has been saved, someone who has been born again, and somebody who has become a partaker of the divine nature. I'm telling you that that person can never, ever again, be a lost soul. Not everyone who professes to be saved is saved. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7, verses 22 and 23: *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? 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). Now outwardly, they looked like they were saved, but they were never saved. They didn't lose their salvation—they never had it. But Jesus said to His sheep, 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, who 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).

Now there's a difference between those who know, and those who never knew: those whom He never knew didn't lose their salvation—they may have been religious, but they were never saved; but, those He knows—those who have that personal relationship with Jesus—can never, ever be a lost soul. Somebody says, "Well, I know someone who was once saved, and now he's lost." No, you don't. You know someone whom you thought was saved, but now he may be lost. But dear friend, a person who was truly saved can never, ever again, be a lost soul.

Well, you say, "What about all those people who were deacons, pastors, and so forth, and now they are infidels and atheists and so forth?" They were never saved. First John 2, verse 19: *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us"* (1 John 2:19). We have a saying around here: *The faith that fizzles at the finish had a flaw from the first*. They never, ever really were saved. They didn't lose their salvation—they never had it. Let me give you these seven reasons, which explain why it is that, if you are a saved person, you can never, ever be a lost soul, again. Now let me get the watch out there, so that I'll keep my word.

I. Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God, Which Is in Christ Jesus

All right now, listen. Reason number one is because nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Turn to Romans, chapter 8, and I begin reading in verse 38. You want me to give you a hundred dollars? I'll give you a hundred dollars if you can name something that is left out of this sentence that might separate us from the love of Jesus. The Apostle Paul said, *"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life"*—I've already covered every base already; anything that happens to you: not death; nor anything that happens after death; nor anything that happens while you're living; that already covers every base—*"nor angels"*—good angels or bad angels; the devil is a fallen angel—*"nor principalities"*—that means kingdoms—*"nor powers"*—that means authority—*"nor things present"*—that is, anything, anything that is present—*"nor things to come"*—anything that may be created—*"nor height"*—that means anything in Heaven—*"nor depth"*—that means anything in Hell. And in case he left anything out, he says, *"nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39).

Ladies and gentlemen, if there were no other verse in the Bible that dealt with

eternal security, then this one would cover the base. I'm telling you: there is absolutely nothing that can separate a child of God from the love of his dear Lord. That's the first reason.

II. When We Are Saved, We Are Made Perfect Forever

I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 10, if you will, with me, for just a moment. The second reason is that, when we are saved, we are made perfect forever. Hebrews chapter 10, and look with me, if you will, please, in verse 14—Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 14—look at it. *“For by one offering he”*—Jesus; he is talking about Jesus—*“hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). The word *sanctified* means “them that are saved.” Jesus, when He died on the cross, died one time—He doesn't keep dying. And when He died, He died for your salvation, and He saves you forever.

Now salvation is not just a new start. In the Old Testament, when people committed sin, they had to come back and offer another sacrifice...and another sacrifice, and another sacrifice. But Jesus offered one sacrifice for sin forever. Now if sin were ever marked up against your name again, then you'd have to go back and get another sacrifice.

Listen to me folks. I want you to understand this. If you ever lost your salvation, in order for you to be saved again, then Jesus would have to die again. Do you understand that? If you ever lost your salvation, in order for you to be saved again, then Jesus would have to die again. When you got salvation it was marked “good for one salvation only.” Good for one salvation only. If it doesn't last, then you're going to have to get another sacrifice. *“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). That's the reason I defy you to show me, in the Bible, where anybody was ever saved twice. You find that, and I'll give you another hundred dollars. You say, “That's not enough.” All right, five hundred dollars—you name it. You won't find, in the Bible, where anybody was saved twice. You can't be saved twice because, *“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”*

III. Our Lord Always Finishes What He Begins

All right, here's the third reason: because our Lord always finishes what He begins. Turn with me to the book of Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6, and look at it please—Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6—the Bible says here, *“Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it”*—that is, He will complete it or keep it—*“until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6). “He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it.” Who began that good work in you? The Holy Spirit of God. Do you know why you love Him? Because He first loved you. Who

performed that work in you? The Holy Spirit of God.

Let me tell you what the Holy Spirit of God does for your salvation: number one, He was the Convictor—He convicted you of sin. Number two, He was the Converter—He worked a miracle in your heart. And I'm here to tell you that the Convictor and the Converter is also the Completer. Do you understand what I'm saying? *"He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it"* (Philippians 1:6). There's no possible way that God will not finish what He's begun. If God fails to finish what He's begun, then God has failed, and He cannot fail. I have started to do a number of things before, and I've failed at them; but He cannot fail. He must prevail. *"Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* Now that's the third reason.

IV. We Are Predestined to Be Like Jesus

The fourth reason—I want you to go back to Romans 8 again—the fourth reason is this: because we are predestined to be like Jesus. Turn with me now to Romans 8, and look with me in verses 29 and 30: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he"*—God's Son—*"might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover"*—watch it—*"whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified"* (Romans 8:29-30).

Now we're in some deep water, and some deep theology. Now what is this all about? Well, first of all, God tells us two things. God looked down through His telescope of omniscience, and God saw a young man named Adrian Rogers, even before this world was put in space. God saw that young man. He saw that teenage kid. It doesn't look like he's got much hope. Looks like he deserves Hell. But He sees that boy named Adrian Rogers. He sees him repenting of his sin. He sees him in tears, asking Jesus to save him. He sees that boy healed, and He foreknows it. And when He sees that, not only does He foreknow it, but He also predestinates it. *"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to become conformed to the image of his Son"* (Romans 8:29).

Do you know what *predestinate* means? It means, friends, that it is already settled. My destiny is settled ahead of time. I am predestinated to be like Jesus. Now I want to ask you a question: If I'm predestinated to be like Jesus—if it is settled in eternity—how can it be undone in time? I am predestinated to be like Jesus. Do you understand that? Now you say you don't understand it? Just believe it; believe it. We are predestinated to be like Jesus. And that my dear friend, is the fourth reason.

V. You Are in Christ

Now here's the fifth reason that I want to give you, which explains why it is that a saved person can never, ever again, be a lost soul. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17—look at it. *“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are past away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Here's the fifth reason: because I am in Christ. I am in Christ. That means that I am a part of the Body of Christ. If I were to perish, then a part of Christ would perish. I will lose my relationship with God the Father when Jesus Christ loses His relationship with God the Father.

I am in Christ just like Noah was in Noah's ark. Now if Noah went down, it would be because the ark went down—because Noah was in the ark. The ark was a picture of Jesus, and when Noah went into that ark, God shut the door. Not only did God shut the water out, but God also shut Noah in. Now listen, friend. Noah was in that ark. He may have fallen down a lot of times in that ark, but he never fell out of it. Amen? Because he was in Christ, and the door was shut. The Bible says: *“after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”* (Ephesians 1:13). Noah was not outside of that ark, hanging onto a peg—he was inside that ark.

Dear friend, I want to tell you something: Some people think that they are going to be secure. They think that they are going to be secure when they get to Heaven. I want to tell you something: The angels fell from Heaven. If you're not secure down here, then you wouldn't be secure up there. Did you hear that? *Your security is not in a place—it is in a person, and His name is Jesus.* And if you're in Jesus, then you're secure; and if you're not in Jesus, then you're not secure.

VI. We Already Have Eternal Life

Now I want to give you the sixth reason. We're making time, aren't we? You're listening good. All right, here's the sixth reason that I can never, ever be a lost soul again. Turn, if you will, with me to John chapter 5 and verse 24. I want to give you another wonderful, wonderful verse—John chapter 5 and verse 24: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life”* (John 5:24).

The sixth reason is this: because we already have eternal life. Listen to it again: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life...”* (John 5:24). Have you believed on Jesus? Have you believed? Have you heard His Word? Have you believed on the God that sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world? Have you? Then, the Bible says that you now have everlasting life.

Everlasting life is not something you get when you die. Everlasting life is something

you get when you receive Jesus. I have everlasting life right now. I'm not going to get everlasting life when I die. I have it now. I have it the moment that I receive Christ. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word"—I've heard it—"and believeth on him that sent me,"—and I believe—"hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life"* (John 5:24). I'm not going to pass from death unto life—I have passed from death unto life. You're looking at a man that can never die. Jesus said, *"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"* (John 11:26). I will never die. My carcass—my body—may cease to function for a while, but I cannot die. I have everlasting life.

Now I want to ask you a question: *If I have everlasting life, when can it end? Suppose I had it for ten years, and then it ended. Did I have everlasting life? I had a ten-year life. Suppose that I kept it for fifty years, and then I lost it. Did I have everlasting life? I had fifty-year life. Friend, whatever you have—if you ever lose it—whatever it was, it wasn't everlasting.*

Do you understand what I'm saying? Dear friend, everlasting life is not something that you hope to get. Everlasting life is something that we now have, if we have Jesus Christ, and as the Bible says, *"Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life..."* (John 5:24).

VII. Our Lord Jesus Christ Is Ever Interceding for Us

Now the last reason that I want to give you of these seven reasons is this: because my Lord Jesus Christ is ever interceding for me. Turn to John chapter 17. I can never be a lost soul again, because of the intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus. In John 17, verse 9, Jesus is praying, and this is what He says—He is praying for His disciples—He said, *"I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine"* (John 17:9). Now Jesus is praying. It is very clear that He is praying for the ones that the Father has given to Him. What is He praying 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).

Now our Lord is praying that we would be kept in this present world—that we would be kept, literally, from the evil one. You say, "That's wonderful; but Jesus prayed that almost two thousand years ago. He prayed that for Peter, James, and John, but He didn't pray that for Ken, Adrian, and Jim. He didn't pray that for you; He just prayed it for them, way back yonder."

But now let me show you something, friend, and this ought to make you say, "Hallelujah!" Look in verse 20: *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word"* (John 17:20). And if you don't mind, just write

your name, if you've got your Bible open, right there. Just write your name right there. Jesus prayed for me! He looked down through the corridor of time, and Jesus said, "Father, I pray for these that thou hast given me, not that you'll take them out of the world, but that you'll keep them." And then He said, "Father, not only do I pray for these, but I pray for those who will believe down there in Memphis, Tennessee—for those in Bellevue Baptist Church—I pray for them also."

Now I want to ask you a question: Has Jesus ever prayed a prayer that wasn't answered? No, not one. He said, "*Father, I thank thee...that thou hearest me always*" (John 11:42). "Always," because Jesus always prays in the will of God. And the Bible says, "*he ever liveth to make intercession for [us]*" (Hebrews 7:25).

Conclusion

Now let me just give the conclusion for this. I've given you seven reasons. Somebody says, "Oh, but I believe that's a dangerous doctrine." Friend, it is error that is dangerous. It is truth that is never dangerous. It is not a dangerous doctrine. You say, "Well, people just won't walk close to the Lord if you teach them that they're once saved, always saved." I try to walk as closely to the Lord as I can, and I believe that doctrine. Friend, I want to tell you: I serve my Lord not out of fear, but out of love and gratitude for what He's done for me.

Wouldn't a little child be frustrated if the child, when he disobeyed his parents, thought he was no longer a member of the family? He's a member of the family...now he's not a member of the family. Now he's in...now he's out. What kind of a neurotic child would that be? That child needs to learn that, if that child disobeys his parents, that the parent will lovingly scold that child and, if necessary, will chastise that child. That child knows that he is a part of the family, because Daddy loves him and Momma loves him. The Bible says, "*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up*" (Psalm 27:10).

I want to tell you, dear friend, that that is not a dangerous doctrine. If somebody says, "Well, if I believed in *once saved, always saved*, then I'd get saved, and I'd sin all I want to." *Friend, you're looking at a man who sins all he wants to. I sin more than I want to. I don't want to.* If you have the idea that you'd get saved, and then you'd sin all you want to, and you have that kind of a sinning religion, then you don't know the Bible, you don't know the Lord, and you don't know Jesus. You get saved and you get your *wanter* fixed, mister. As a matter of fact, you get a brand new *wanter*. He doesn't just fix it—He gives you a new one.

If somebody says, "Well, there are other scriptures that seem to conflict this..." Friend, any scripture that you look at, in proper context—and I don't have time to get

into that tonight, but I could show you, if I had time, that there is no scripture, rightly understood, that contradicts the blessed, wonderful doctrine that we are saved by grace, and kept by grace.

Isn't it wonderful that we can be saved? It's more wonderful that we can be saved, and know that we are saved. But it is trice wonderful to know that we can be saved, know that we're saved, and know that we can never lose it. If you are saved, then I want you to rejoice in your wonderful salvation. If you are not saved, then I want you to receive such a wonderful salvation, because it may be, friend—it just may be—that somebody here tonight would say, "I'd like to be saved, but I just believe I couldn't live it." Friend, I have wonderful news: You cast yourself upon Jesus, and He will never, never leave you, nor forsake you. He'll carry you through. And it won't be because you are holding on to Him, but it will be because He's holding on to you. Thank God! Hallelujah! Amen! Let's pray.

Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Death

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 9, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 11

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

JOHN 11:25–26

Outline

Introduction

- I. I Must Experience Life in Jesus
- II. I Must Exercise Liberty Through Jesus
- III. I Must Enjoy Love for Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding John chapter eleven; and, when you've found it, look up here for just a moment. And I want to tell you that Jesus is the only reason that we live. As a matter of fact, He came that we might live. He said, in John ten and verse ten—now, you're in John eleven, but He said in John ten and verse ten—“I have come that you might have life.” He's the only reason I live. “I've come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.”

So, most folks today don't have life; they have existence. They are fighting to live while they're living to fight. They're drawing their breath, and drawing their salary, and one day is turning into another. They have existence, but they don't have life. They've got it all backward. Let's take the word life—L-I-F-E—and think about it a little bit, because life is the way we live. L-I-V-E is the way we live. Now if you take live, and spell it backward, what is it? E-V-I-L—evil. Just get it backward. And, after you've lived, if you haven't lived for Jesus, if you've lived for some other reason, when your life is over, when it has been lived, just take lived and spell it backward: D-E-V-I-L—devil.

Folks, Jesus has come that you might have life. Satan has come to rob you of life; he comes to steal and to kill and to destroy. We're not fools for following the Lord Jesus Christ, but the problem is, many people do not have life. They don't understand life, and

they look at life very pessimistically. Disraeli said that, youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age a regret. Well, that may be true, if you don't know the Lord Jesus. It was Shakespeare who said that, "Life's a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Some college students were asked to give a definition of life for the school newspaper, and here are some definitions that won honorable mention. One said, "Life is a joke that isn't even funny." Another said, "Life is a disease, for which the only cure is death." Another said, "Life is a jail sentence that we get for the crime of being born." You know, we think about Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Dr. Death. I wonder what makes that man tick? What motivates him? What's his basic underlying, underpinning philosophy? Well, I read it the other day, because he was being interviewed on 60 Minutes, and he was asked about religion. He was asked about faith, and here's what Dr. Death said. He said people like us base their whole outlook on mythology. He believes that what we believe is mythology, you see. And then, he says, "Religion is an internal spiritual world. I have my own god, Johann Sebastian Bach." My Brother Jim, Bach, that's his god—Dr. Kevorkian. And then, he goes on to say, "Why not? You invent gods. At least, he's not invented." That's Dr. Death.

Well, let me read to you about the Lord of life, the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse twenty-five: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Now, I'd rather go with the Lord of life than Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Disraeli, or Shakespeare, or those college students, or so many other people who do not understand the meaning of life.

Actually, we have been studying together seven miracles in the Gospel of John, and these are miracles with a message. These are signs with a significance. They are literal, actual miracles. They are miracles of glory that have in them messages of grace. Now, the miracles happened, but the miracles happened to teach us greater lessons; to teach us great, eternal spiritual truth. Now, what we're studying today is the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Well, did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead just in order to raise Lazarus from the dead? No. Lazarus died again. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead to give us an illustration of the greater spiritual truth of eternal life. Where He says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die," that's the greatest truth; that's the truth we need to learn. Now, we saw Jesus turning water into wine, and we saw that Jesus is God's answer to man's disappointment. The wines of this world run out, but Jesus gives joy that is full and free and forever. Then we saw Jesus healing the nobleman's son, the nobleman had difficulty believing, and Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and miracles, you'll not believe." But Jesus is not only God's

answer to man's disappointment; Jesus is God's answer to man's doubt. And He gave this man a great lesson on spiritual faith. And then, we saw the Lord Jesus Christ heal an impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. The man was paralyzed, he could do nothing; and Jesus came and said, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." Why that miracle? To show us the greater miracle: that Jesus is God's answer to man's disability. While we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. And then, we saw the Lord Jesus Christ as He fed five thousand—five thousand hungry people. Was He doing that just to show that He could feed five thousand people? Of course not! He didn't feed everybody there, everywhere He went. He's teaching a lesson. It was a miracle of glory, but it spoke of a miracle of grace: that Jesus is God's answer for man's desires. I am the Bread of Life. That's the lesson behind the miracle. That's the significance in the sign.

And then, Jesus walked on the water. What was He doing? Was He just showing off? Oh no, there's a lesson. When Jesus there walked on the water, those disciples were in a storm. They thought their little ship was about to sink. They were in despair. And then, they saw that everything that looked like it was going to be over their head was already under His feet. Jesus is God's answer to man's despair.

And then, Jesus opens the eyes of a man born blind. This man stumbling in darkness, a man blind by birth, a beggar, he needed life. And Jesus opens his eyes. Why? Just to show that He can open a blind man's eyes? He didn't open every blind man's eyes. But what was He showing? Jesus is God's answer to man's darkness. I am the Light of the world. That's the message in the miracle. And now, we come to the last of these seven miracles.

Jesus is raising a man from the dead. That man's name is Lazarus. Well, He doesn't raise everybody from the dead in this life, of course not. But what is the message in the miracle? Jesus is God's answer to man's death—I am the Resurrection and the Life—miracles of glory that speak of greater miracles of grace. That's the reason I told you, friend, believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus. Do you understand what I'm talking about? These miracles are not to have us put our faith in miracles. Our faith is to be in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want us to see today what we're going to learn from this wonderful miracle. If you want full life, wonderful life, the abundant life that we've been talking about, the life that Tim sang about, let me give you some steps.

I. I Must Experience Life in Jesus

Step number one—jot it down, get a pencil and a piece of paper, and write this down: I must experience life in Jesus—I must experience life in Jesus.

Now, look, if you will, in verse fourteen of this chapter. Jesus talks about His friend, Lazarus. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is"—what? What's that word?

Let's see if you're reading: "dead." Lazarus is dead. Now, folks, Lazarus had a king-size problem: he's dead. Now, there might have been many wonderful things you could say about Lazarus. You might say Lazarus has a full set of hair. You might say that Lazarus has a nice suntan. You might say that Lazarus is wearing a nice suit. You might say that Lazarus is surrounded by many friends. You might say that Lazarus is lying on a nice couch. No matter how many things might be right about him, there's nothing really right about him, because there's one thing very wrong about him: he is dead.

Now, you might be telling me all the wonderful things about you today, but if you don't know the Lord Jesus, what do they matter, if you're dead? You see, there are many folks who are listening to me right now who are dead. You're dead in trespasses and sin. And the Bible says that, in 1 Timothy chapter five, verse six, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she lives." Do you know any folks who are dead while they live? Memphis is full of them. New York City is full of them. Tokyo is full of them. They are dead while they live. And yet, there are other people we call dead who are not dead at all. You say, my mama is dead; my daddy is dead. Not if they know Jesus—not if they know Jesus. They're just kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory. They're not dead.

Hey, you want to see a man that it's impossible for that man to die, a man that cannot die? Take a good look right up here, right here: here he is. I can never die. You say, now wait a minute, Adrian; of course you can die. No, I can never die. It's absolutely, totally impossible for me to die. Now, this body may cease to function. What does the Bible call my body? An earthly house. Now, my earthly house may decay. It may wind down to the grave. Suppose I were to give a gasp and a shudder, and fall on this platform, and get very still. And suppose some of these doctors—and I'm looking into the face of some good doctor friends right now—were to come up here and take my vital signs—whatever they do. Then they would stand up, and say, Well, the Pastor is dead. Well, that wouldn't be true. That wouldn't be true. Jesus said, He that lives and believes in me shall I never die. Now, whose word are you going to take—the doctor's or Jesus'? You see, I cannot die, I will just simply move out. But I will not die. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. It is absolutely totally impossible for me to die. So many people who are listening to me right now, you think you have life; but Jesus says you're dead. And so many people that we call dead are not dead at all, because they have eternal life. Do you understand? I hope you understand that we never really die when we know the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the most unusual men that I ever had the joy of knowing was a man named Charlie Fisher. He was a little wiry guy; we called him Uncle Charlie. He was more on fire for Jesus, I believe, than any man I've ever seen. And Uncle Charlie, was a member of my church in Fort Pierce, Florida. Uncle Charlie was the kind of guy that had an old airplane, an old canvas-covered airplane. He would fly over county fairs and dump out

bushels of tracts, and then have a loudspeaker, and he would fly around and preach to the people down there, telling them about the Lord Jesus. He would go on street meetings, did all kinds of strange things. I could tell you so many stories about Uncle Charlie. But I think the strangest thing about Uncle Charlie is, when he finally died, he preached his own funeral. What Uncle Charlie did was to tell his son, Lee, he said, Now, Lee, when they come to my funeral, just get all my friends there. You don't have to do a thing. Just get all my friends there, and here's a tape recorder. Just push that button right there—that's all. And so, all his friends were there, and it was time for the funeral, and Uncle Charlie was out there—at least, his body was there. And they pushed the button on the tape recorder, and it was Uncle Charlie Fisher. He said, Hello, friends. This is Charlie Fisher. He said, I'm up here in heaven, and it is wonderful up here in heaven, and he began to describe heaven, and tell all about heaven, and tell how wonderful it was. And then, he said, I want all of you down there to come and meet me in heaven. The only man I ever knew who preached his own funeral, Uncle Charlie Fisher. And he, being dead, was yet speaking.

That's what Jesus is talking about he that lives in pleasure or she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives, but, when we have the Lord Jesus Christ, we have everlasting life. You know, folks, sometimes we look around at other people, and we think that we're a little bit better than they are. You know that the Bible records that Jesus raised three from the dead. Do you remember who they were? There was a little girl that was in the back bedroom asleep. Well, actually, she died. Jesus said, she's asleep, and every one laughed him to scorn. But her little body was still warm, a precious little girl there in the back bedroom. Jesus went back while the rest were laughing, and Jesus said, wake up, sweetheart. Literally—that's what the Greek language says—little darling get up. She wakes up; He raises this little girl.

Then there was another occasion. Jesus was on His way, and there was a funeral. And a young man was there, being carried along. He had died—rigor mortis had set in, but decay had not yet set in. And, you know, Jesus broke up every funeral He ever came to. Jesus raised that young man from the dead.

And then, the third person that the Bible records that Jesus raised from the dead was this man Lazarus. How many days had he been in the tomb? Four. How long was he before they put him in the tomb? We don't know, but there was time for putrefaction and decay and corruption to begin. And when Jesus said, roll away the stone, they said no; no, no, wait a minute, Lord, what about the stench? Jesus said, roll away the stone, and this man, whose body had begun to decay, Jesus raised from the dead.

Now, I want to ask you a question. The little girl, the young man, and Lazarus—which one was the most dead? Which one was the most dead? Folks, dead is dead. Isn't that right? Dead is dead. There's no such thing as being a little bit pregnant and a

little bit dead. Dead is dead. Now, what we do, we turn around and we look at other people, and we see the drunk covered with vomit and flies, and reeking in corruption—the dope addict, the prostitute. We say, man, look at that. I want to tell you, mister, you sitting in this service today all dressed up without Jesus, you're just as dead—just as dead. I want to tell you, precious young lady here today, you may be a teenage girl, sweet and pure as the driven snow, sexually. You may have never used booze and dope, but without Jesus Christ, you are dead in trespasses and sin. I hope we understand that today, that men need life from the Lord Jesus Christ. So put it down: I must experience life in Christ.

Now, how do you experience life in Christ? How? Suppose we had a dead person up here on this platform today and we raised the dead. Well, let me ask you what do social engineers say that many need today. I'm talking about what the people in the universities say. What do the sociologist, the psychologist, and the psychiatrist say that people need today? Let me give you, their four E's. They say people need example, people need encouragement, people need environment, and people need education. That's what they say. People need example, they need encouragement, they need environment, and they need education. Now, folks, we're spending billions of dollars on those things, to try to do those things.

Now, suppose we had a dead man up here today, and we're trying to raise a dead man today. How are we going to raise that dead man? I'll tell you one way we could raise that dead man. See if you think this will work: by giving him an example. I could get Brother Bobby Lewis over here, and I'd say, Bobby, I've got a dead man; come show him how a live man lives. Do fifty push-ups. Could you do that? Do fifty push-ups. So here's Bobby down here showing this man the strength and energy that he has. That's an example to dead man. Do you think an example is going to raise a dead man? Well, you say, no, that won't do it. All right, what are we going to do? We're going to encourage him. Here he is. And so, I'm a pastor. And so, I say hey, man, you can do it. Come on, now. Come on. Atta boy. Atta boy. Am I going to encourage a dead man to life?

Well, you say, environment—that's the answer. Let's take that dead man and leave him in this room full of living people. And, if you put him in the right environment, that'll give him life. No, it won't. Let me tell you something. Environment is not the answer, and the people of this world can never learn that. I think that we ought to do all we can do to help people have a good environment, but I want to remind you of something. Adam and Eve got in trouble in the Garden of Eden. You can't have a better environment than that. You think environment is the answer? It cannot be the answer.

Well, you say, I'll tell you what the answer is. Brother Bobby, go get a medical book. Let's educate this man. Let's give him twenty lessons on life. He's dead. And so, many

people think, well, the answer to this world's problem is education. No. It's Jesus. Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ.

But those four E's are not the answer to a dead man. I need life from the Lord Jesus. That's why Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave: to tell us what it is all about. Now, how does Jesus raise Lazarus? It's very simple and very sweet. Jesus just says to him, in verse 43, "And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." No pleading, no argument, just, Lazarus, come forth.

How do you raise a dead man spiritually? The same way that Jesus raised Lazarus: by His Word. That was a good place for an amen. I'll say it again. How do you raise a man spiritually? The same way that Jesus raised Lazarus physically: by His Word. Amen? Okay. All right now, listen. He's already said, in John chapter 6 and verse 43, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing"—the word quickeneth means gives life—"the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life—the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." We are born again by the Word of God. The Word of God is quick and powerful. And the word quick is zoon. It's the word we get zoology from. Alive. And powerful, energize, with power. The Word of God.

How do you raise a dead man? The Word of God—the Word of God. That's the reason that the Bible says, in Philippians chapter two, verse sixteen, we are to be "holding forth the word of life."

II. I Must Exercise Liberty Through Jesus

All right, the first thing that you wrote down is I must experience life in Christ. Now, write this down: I must exercise liberty through Christ. Now, look, if you will, in verse forty-four. Lazarus comes out of the grave, and the Bible says, "and he that was dead came fourth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Can you imagine that scene? Jesus says, Roll away the stone. I can imagine, every eye is fixed on that gaping hole. And then, Jesus said, Lazarus, come out of there. Suppose you'd been there. You're looking at the mouth of the tomb, and after a while, there appears in the door of that tomb a figure—Hollywood hasn't got it all—a wreck round and round. He has life, but he doesn't have liberty. He's bound, he blind, he's gagged; he can't walk he can't work, he can't speak, he can't see. And yet, he has life. And, Jesus says, loose him, and let him go. Now, Lazarus, at this stage, is like so many people I know. They have been saved, but they are not living in victory. They have been to Calvary for pardon, but they've not yet been to Pentecost for power. Somehow, they have bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost. They have life, but they don't have liberty.

Now, would you have wanted to have Lazarus home for dinner at this particular

stage? I mean, he may have life, he may be raised, but his grave clothes stink. The stench of death is on him. He still has the smell of death. Those grave clothes are relics of his old life, and our Lord says, take that off of him, unwrap him. Loose him, and let him go. Now, listen. Jesus did not just simply come to give you life. He came to give you abundant life. He doesn't want you wearing the grave clothes of the old life. In John chapter eight and verse thirty-two: You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you—what?—free. And John eight, verse thirty-six: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." You see, so many of us still are wearing the grave clothes of the old live, and yet we have truly been saved. The old loves, the old lusts, the old learning, the old lies—they all stay there—because we still have the grave clothes of the old life. But Jesus says, set him free. That's the reason we need the church.

Do you know what the ministry of the church is? Number one: to call forth the dead. Number two: to unwrap the saints. Number one: to raise the dead. Number two: to unwrap the saints; to give them liberty. Thank God for those who unwrapped me, and they're still unwrapping. I'm so grateful for the church I was raised in. I wish I had more time to talk about that, but we've got to go on to step number three.

III. I Must Enjoy Love for Jesus

Now notice, folks, that you've got to have life from Jesus. You've got to have liberty in Jesus, or through Jesus. Now, write down number three. I must enjoy love for Jesus. I must enjoy love for Jesus. Experience life in Jesus. I must exercise liberty through Jesus. I must enjoy love for Jesus. Turn to chapter twelve, now, and read verses one and two: "Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany. Where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead." Now, notice verse two: "There they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that set at the table with him." Don't you like that?

Oh, folks, life, liberty, and now fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He's gone from the tomb to the table. He's sitting up there at the table now, no more grave clothes. There he is face-to-face with Jesus. Wouldn't you love to have a meal with Jesus? I mean, wouldn't you love to have fellowship with Him? Well, you can have. That's what we have every time we come to the Lord's Table. That's a meal with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus says in Revelation chapter three, verse twenty: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

You know, if you read the Bible, so many times Jesus was inviting His disciples to eat with Him. He would say, come and dine. People say we Baptists put too much emphasis on banquets. Maybe we don't put enough—maybe we don't put enough. Friend, it is our legacy to fellowship with one another. It is our legacy to fellowship with

the Lord Jesus. Come and dine, Jesus said. I will have supper with Him, and he with me, and now here's Lazarus sitting at the table with the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, folks. Salvation is not a penalty that you pay in order to get to heaven. I'd want to be a Christian if there were no heaven. There is a heaven. But just to know the Lord Jesus Christ, in this life, to love the Lord Jesus and to have Him love me back. Well, I wish I had more time there, but I'm going to move on.

Here's a fourth thing I want you to write down, and this is the final one. I must express loyalty to Jesus—life from Jesus, liberty through Jesus, love for Jesus, and loyalty to Jesus. Now, you're in chapter twelve; continue to read here in verse nine: "The Jews, therefore, knew that he was there." That is who was there. Lazarus was there. "And they came not for Jesus sake only, but that they might see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead." "But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death because by reason of him"—that is, by reason of Lazarus—"many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus." Now, here's the man with the life, the liberty, and the love, and now he's expressing loyalty. He's standing up for Jesus; he's giving testimonies for Jesus, and he is dangerous to Satan's kingdom. I mean, people are getting saved. They're coming to Jesus; they're being saved. Not that more dead people are getting raised—that's not the purpose of it. People are believing on Jesus; people are getting saved; they're getting eternal life. And the Pharisees there, in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled, they said, we've got to do something about this guy. Shut him up. Put him to death. Now, you talk about a joke—that is a joke: they're going to kill Lazarus. I want to ask you a question: do you think Lazarus was the least bit worried about that? You think about it—you think about it. Do you think that death held any more terrors for this man named Lazarus? Think about it. I mean, folks, he is not intimidated at all by the fact that they might put him to death. You see, Satan is the sinister minister of fear, and the Bible says that through the fear of death he keeps people in bondage. Lazarus is no longer afraid of death. They're going to kill him. He already knows now that he has the Lord of life. They may destroy his body, but all they'll do is hasten him on to heaven. He knows that now.

No man is ready to live until he is no longer afraid to die. And, when we're no longer afraid to die, then we live as this man Lazarus lived. And when we live our lives for Jesus, when we have life and liberty and love and fellowship and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are experiencing the life that He's talking about, when He said, I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly.

Conclusion

Now, look up here and let me just give you the bottom line of the whole thing. Many folks here, you've got problems. You're not saved. You say, what is the answer to my

problem? Well, it's not a what; it's who. His name is Jesus. He is God's answer to your problem—all of these seven problems summed up in the big one called death.

Can you remember the story of the four men who brought this paralyzed man to Jesus? Let's just use a little imagination. Here are these four men, and they are saying to their friend who's totally paralyzed, we're going to bring you to Jesus. Get on this stretcher. He says to the man on this corner of this stretcher, but look, Jesus can't do anything for me. I am totally paralyzed. But the man says, I had blind eyes. He opened my blind eyes. He said, that's just your eyes; I'm paralyzed all over. The man on this corner says, but, wait a minute, let me tell you about, I had a withered arm, and Jesus strengthened my arm. He said, yes, but that's just your arm. I'm paralyzed all over. Here's another man: I was deaf; I couldn't hear, and Jesus opened my deaf ears. He said, yes, but that's just your ears. I'm paralyzed all over. Now, let's just imagine a man on this corner of the stretcher who says, may I introduce myself to you? My name is Lazarus. Hello? I don't care what your problem is, friend, the one who can raise the dead is the answer to your problem. You don't have a problem too big for Him. That's the reason this is the seventh in this parade of miracles.

Believe in miracles—okay—but trust in Jesus. He did not come just simply to open blinded eyes, unstop deaf ears, to straightened withered arms, even to raise physical bodies temporarily from the grave; He came to save soul. I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly. Beyond miracles, and on to Jesus.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. You need Jesus right now—no one stirring please; if you're saved, begin to pray for those round about you who may not be saved. You may not know if they're saved or not, so just pray for them. If you want the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And that word believe means trust—trust Him, trust Him. Don't just believe intellectually; put your faith in Him. Trust Him. Pray this way. Dear God, I am a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. I am dead in trespasses and sin. I need more than encouragement. I need more than education. I need more than example. I need more than environment. I need life. Lord, I need you. Come into my heart. Come into my life, right now. Pray this from your heart, friend. Come into my heart, right now. Just forget anybody else is here; you can be saved this moment, if you are sincere. Lord Jesus, come into my heart, into my life. I repent of my sin. I turn from my sin. I open my heart. I receive you. Lord, you're strong, but I am weak. So, begin now to make me the person you want me to be. Help me, Lord. Help me to get off the grave clothes. Help me, Lord, to fellowship with you, even to witness for you. I need you, Lord Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen.

Resurrection Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 16, 1980

Main Scripture Text: John 11

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 11, and I want to speak to you tonight on “Resurrection Life”—“Resurrection Life.” The life that Jesus gives is resurrection life. And we’re going to study about that tonight in John chapter 11.

You know if you’re a Bible scholar that John chapter 11 is the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Now, Lazarus was not resurrected in the classic sense of the word; He was resuscitated, or he was restored or brought back to life. But he is a picture of resurrection life, as we’re going to see here in just a moment. I’m reading, first of all, in John chapter 11 and verses 14 and 15: *“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”* (John 11:14–15)

Now, Jesus stayed away and let Lazarus die when obviously Jesus could have come to where Lazarus was and heal him. But Jesus stayed away on purpose. And it was in the plan of God that Lazarus die. And Lazarus, who was a friend of the Lord Jesus, did die. Now, Jesus said, “I’m glad that he’s dead for this reason: There’s something I want you to believe.” Jesus was about to teach them a lesson. Well, what was the lesson? What was it that Jesus wanted them to believe?

Look, if you will, now in verse 24: *“Martha saith unto him, I know that he”—*

Lazarus—*“shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*

(John 11:24–26) That’s what Jesus wanted everyone to believe that day: that He Himself was the resurrection and the life. And so, the Lord Jesus here in this episode in the raising of Lazarus from the dead that we’re going to study tonight teaches us a marvelous and a wonderful lesson about resurrection life, where Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me shall never die.”

Now, this was a literal event and it actually happened. But behind the literal event is a parable of truth. G. Campbell Morgan, who is a great biblical expositor, said that all of the parables that Jesus gave are miracles of teaching, and all of the miracles that Jesus performed are parables for our teaching. Now he did not mean that the miracles did not literally happen, but he meant that beyond the miracle there is a message. And this is particularly true in the resurrection of Lazarus.

He allowed Lazarus to die and raised him from the dead that we might learn something about resurrection life, because when you get saved, you experience resurrection life even before your body is resurrected. Jesus said in John 5, verse 24, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* (John 5:24) That is, when we receive the Lord Jesus, we step out of the death and into life.

So I want us to notice tonight as we look in this eleventh chapter of the Gospel according to John, I want us to notice some things about the life that Jesus gives.

I. Resurrected Life

First of all, it is resurrected life. Notice now in verses 23 through 26 again: *“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”* (John 11:23–26) Now I want you to skip on over to verses 43 and following: *“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth.”* (John 11:43–44)

Now I want you to get the picture. Lazarus has died. Lazarus has been buried. He has been in the grave for several days. And the Lord Jesus Christ comes and He calls him forth. And Lazarus, who was literally and physically dead, is revived, resuscitated, or restored, or whatever you want to call it, and he comes forth. Now, his coming forth from the dead physically is but a picture of our being saved spiritually. And therefore I

want to make some applications as we think about Lazarus, who was dead, coming back to life.

There was only one thing wrong with Lazarus. And so therefore there was nothing right with Lazarus. The one thing that was wrong with Lazarus is that he was dead. Now, dear friend, you may tonight be without the Lord Jesus Christ, and there may be many things that seem to be right—but there's one thing wrong with you if you're not a Christian: you're dead. Now you say, "How could I be dead and sitting here listening to you?" Well, you need to understand what death is in the Bible. Death is not the separation of the soul from the body. In the Bible, death is the separation of the spirit from God. That's the reason the Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 6, "*She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*" (1 Timothy 5:6) That's the reason Jesus said in John chapter 10, verse 10, "*I am come that [you] might have life.*" (John 10:10) Now, your heart may be beating, and your mind may be active, and your limbs may be supple; but I want to tell you, dear friend, without Jesus Christ you are dead! Memphis has a large population of dead people.

Now, let me say that one of the things that maybe hard for us to understand is that some of these children up here may be dead. And some of our teenagers may be dead, as well as some of our adults. Now we know that adults without the Lord Jesus are lost, but we somehow think that little children who've reached the age of accountability, so sweet and precious, they may not be lost. But Jesus raised three from the dead. You remember there in Mark chapter 5 He raised a little girl from the dead? He said, "Little maiden, come forth," and she was raised from the dead. (Mark 5:41–42) And then, you remember reading there in Luke chapter 7 where He raised a young man from the dead. He was a teenager, I suppose. And then, you remember here in John 11 He raised an adult male from the dead. Now one was a little child, one was a young man, and the other was a mature adult. But all three were dead.

Now, let me say something else. The little girl had just died when Jesus raised her from the dead, her body was still warm. The roses had not yet faded from her cheeks. But she was dead. And Jesus said, "Little maiden, arise." The young man had been dead long enough that rigor mortis had set in. He was on his funeral bier. And they were about to bury him, but no decay had set in. And Jesus raised him. Lazarus had been so dead so long that his body had started to decompose. And Jesus raised him. Now I want to ask you a question: How dead is dead? Aren't you just as dead if you're a little girl that just died as a grown man who's died and whose body has started to decay? Aren't you just as dead? Aren't you just as dead if you're a young man who's died and rigor mortis has just set in as though you'd been dead for ten thousand years?

Now, what I'm trying to say is this: Do you know sometimes we look around in our

community and we see a blasphemer, we see a harlot, we see a murderer, we see a thief, we see an ungodly, anti-godly person, and we say that person is dead in trespasses and sin. Now, friend, listen. There are degrees of corruption, but not degrees of deadness. Do you understand what I'm saying? There are degrees of corruption. The body of Lazarus was corrupted. The body of that little girl had not yet corrupted. But both were dead.

I believe when a little child reaches the age of accountability, when a child reaches the age where that child can deliberately say no to God, that child needs to say yes to God or that child is lost. Now, that may seem pretty tough to you, but it's time we got concerned about the souls of our boys and girls. Children that are old enough to lie and to steal and to cheat and to rebel are old enough to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Dead is dead! There are degrees of corruption, but there are not degrees of death. How dead is dead?

Now I believe every little child, he has to reach the age of accountability. And where that age of accountability is the Bible does not say. And I believe when a child is old enough, however, to know that he or she is a sinner, that child is old enough, properly instructed, to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. It is not our job to shove little children. It is not our job to block little children. It is our job to guide little children. But I want to tell you, when a person is saved, he steps from death to life and he is spiritually resurrected.

Now, how do you give life to a dead person? Suppose we had a dead person here and you wanted to raise that dead person: how would you raise that dead person?

A. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Example

Would you come up and say, "Well, what this person needs is an example: I'll just set a good example before him, and I'll live as a live person ought to live around him"? Do you think that would raise him? Do you think that a dead person needs an example? That's the reason why I was telling you this morning Jesus Christ did not come to be an example. It's not the example of Christ that raises us from death to life.

B. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Encouragement

"Well," you say, "if I can't raise a dead man by example, I have an idea: I'll encourage him. It's encouragement that he needs." So what you need to do is just kind of beat on him a little bit and whisper in his ear, maybe give some beautiful music and speak a word of encouragement in his ear; say, "Come on. Come on now. Get up. You can do it. Try harder." Do you think that's what dead people need—encouragement? You think that you're going to encourage lost people, and through your encouragement you're going to make saved people out of them? There are a lot of people who think that

all that people without Christ need is just a word of encouragement.

C. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Environment

Now, there are other people who think, “Well, the answer is not example. It's not encouragement.” They think that the answer is environment. Now, if you'll take a dead person and put him in a room with a lot of live people, he'll be all right, right? Well, you'd be surprised how many people think that's the answer to the world's problems: that environment, he just needs a better environment. Friend, environment is not the answer, if you're dead. Did you know that it was in a perfect environment in the first place that man got into trouble in the Garden of Eden? You can't have a better environment than that. There are people who are telling us today that if we can just take the people out of this bad environment and put them in a good environment, then they'll be changed. Well, I believe in putting people in a good environment, and I believe in environment. I believe in the importance of environment, just as I believe in the importance of example, and I believe in the importance of encouragement. But example and encouragement and environment will not raise a dead man.

D. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Education

Well, you say, “What we need to do then is to just educate that dead man. We need to give him forty lessons on life.” Well, education is good, but education cannot raise a dead man.

E. Only a Miracle Can Raise the Dead

How do the dead receive life? There's only one way: a miracle—a miracle! And there's only one who can give that miracle, and it is Jesus Christ. And I believe that's why this is in the eleventh chapter of John. Jesus here is showing us how the dead can receive life. Not just the physically dead—that isn't what He was teaching. You read again what Jesus Christ was teaching. He was teaching that He is the resurrection and the life. And when one believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die. Jesus here is not just giving a lesson about how to raise a physically dead person. Jesus here is giving a lesson about how to become a Christian, how to pass from death unto life. And so, it takes a miracle. Only Jesus can give that new life.

II. A Released Life

And so, the first thing I want you to notice about the life that Jesus gives is that it is resurrection life. The second thing I want you to notice about the life that Jesus gives is that it is a released life. Look again, if you will, please, in verses 43 and 44: “*And when*

he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.” (John 11:43–44)

Not only did Jesus want to raise him, Jesus also wanted to loose him. Now, just imagine the scene. Jesus says, “Roll away the stone.” Martha and Mary are aghast, and they say, “But, Lord, don’t do that. Don’t you know that by now he has started to decompose? Don’t you know that you don’t open a grave like this? Lord, don’t do it.” But Jesus said, “Roll away the stone.” And at that time every eye was riveted upon that dark hole there at the opening of that tomb. And then, Jesus speaks those majestic words, “*Lazarus, come forth.*” And every eye is peering into that darkness. And then, a white form appears. And, boys and girls, a mummy-like form comes out of that tomb. In the Bible days, when they buried someone, before they buried them, they wrapped them round and round and round and round and round and round with white linen just like a cocoon. And they put it around their face and around their body. Their legs are tied together. It’s like a straitjacket. Their arms are strapped down to their side. Their face is all covered. And when Jesus said, “*Lazarus, come forth,*” he came forth. But this is the way he came forth. Can you imagine that? Wow! That’s the way he came forth.

And Jesus looked at this man who had life but he didn’t have liberty. He had been raised, but he had not been released. And so, Jesus said, “*Loose him, and let him go.*” You see, it’s not enough to preach the gospel and get people saved. We also have to unwrap the saints after we get them saved, because when they get saved, they still have the graveclothes of that old life. And how bewildered Lazarus must have been! You know, he’s dead. Then, the first thing you know, he’s back alive. But now he’s all bound up. He had life, but he had no victory.

Now, there are a lot of people like that who get saved but they are never really loosed from the old life. They have life, but they don’t have liberty. They have been to Calvary for pardon, but they haven’t been to Pentecost for power. They have bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost. And Jesus says to us, when you get someone converted, when that someone receives spiritual life, you have to remember that he still has the graveclothes of the old life. And you have to loose him. These graveclothes that were on Lazarus were relics of his deadness, and they were tainted with corruption, and they were reeking with death, and he needed to get rid of them.

You want me to tell you what your graveclothes were when you got saved? And you were saved, but you still had the graveclothes of the old language. You remember how you got saved? You had to change your vocabulary. *I remember I had the habit of swearing and taking God’s name in vain as a teenage boy. I’m ashamed of it, but I did. And I remember I went forward and I gave my heart to Christ and I got saved. And*

Jesus said, “Come forth,” and I did. And Jesus gave me life, but I didn’t have liberty. I went around for about a week and I did pretty good. And then, I don’t know what happened, whether I stubbed my toe or hit my thumb with a hammer; I don’t know what caused it, but I opened my mouth, and out came those same old words. Did that ever happen to you? Same old vocabulary—just like that! But, oh, how it grieved me! How it hurt me! Those old habits, those old graveclothes, those old relics reeking with death and tainted with corruption still were wrapped around me. And yet, Jesus had given me life.

Many of you have the old language, the old lusts, the old laziness, the old loves, and we need to unwrap the saints. You see, that doesn’t mean that you’re not saved if those old graveclothes are still clinging to you. But the Lord who gave you life now wants to give you liberty. And so, the life that Jesus wants to give you is not only resurrection life; He wants to give you a released life. I love that stanza that says, “He breaks the power of cancelled sin; He sets the prisoner free.” And the Lord that gives you life wants to give you liberty. This liberty we call the Spirit-filled life. “*Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.*” (2 Corinthians 3:17)

III. A Refreshed Life

But now I want you to notice the third thing that Jesus gave Lazarus: Not only did He give him resurrection life, and not only did He give him a released life, but He also gave him a refreshed life. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 12 and verse 2—and the Bible says, “*There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him*”—with Jesus. (John 12:2)

Now, Lazarus has gone from the tomb to the table. Now he was dead a little while ago and he needed life. And so, Jesus gave him life. And then, he was bound, and Jesus gave him liberty. But now he’s hungry, and Jesus feeds him and fellowships with him. And I thank God that after this freedom comes this fellowship to sit at the table with the Lord Jesus. And why did Jesus save you? What’s it all about? Friend, so you could love Him and He could love you; so you could have fellowship with Him and He with you.

Do you remember that passage in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, where Jesus says, “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if anyone hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and*”—what?—“*will [have supper] with him, and he with me.*” (Revelation 3:20) Jesus says, “First of all, I’ll come in and be your guest; and then I’ll become the host, and you can be my guest.” You see, some of the sweetest times that Jesus ever had with His disciples were at the table where Jesus said, “Come and dine.” And here now we find Lazarus sitting at the table and dining with the Lord Jesus.

What is that illustrative of? Friend, the most intimate fellowship is to sit at a table and feed with someone and to feast with someone. Just the other night I was over at Brother Ray Saba's house. And we sat down and he invited me over and he cooked enough food for Pharaoh's army; at least his wife did. And we just ate and fellowshiped and had such a wonderful time. And I got to know him and his family and just to fellowship with him—just so wonderful!

Now I don't know what your politics are. But if President Carter or President-Elect Ronald Reagan, either one of them, were to invite you to the White House, or wherever it is they happen to live right now, for a meal, you'd never get finished telling your friends about it. You know, to think, "Man, I'm so honored that the President of the United States, or the President-Elect of the United States, has had me for a meal!" That would be one thing if you could just go to a meeting with him—but to sit down and have a meal with him!

Friend, what John is telling us here is that Jesus desires the most intimate fellowship with you. He saved you that He might love you and that you might love Him. And the life that He gives is a refreshing life. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) And I want to tell you, if you're not a Christian, I'm not inviting you to a funeral; I'm inviting you to a feast. Jesus put the funeral in reverse and turned it to a feast. Remember this.

You know, some people have the idea, "Boy, one of these days I've got to become a Christian, because I don't want to go to hell." It's like taking bad medicine in order to get well. Do you ever hold your nose when you take medicine? I mean, you just choke it down. There is a heaven, and there is a hell; but I'd be a Christian if there were no heaven and no hell—if the Bible said there was none, that is. You understand what I'm talking about. I'm not saying there's no heaven or there is no hell. There is. But just to know the Lord Jesus in this life: *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."* (Psalm 23:6) Being a Christian is not some penalty you have to pay in order to get to heaven.

And don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian. Friend, I am having a wonderful time, and so is every Spirit-filled Christian. I've been preaching long enough now to have discovered two things: I've never met a real Christian who said that he's sorry that he gave his heart to Jesus Christ. And I'll tell you something else I've never met: I've never met someone who's not a Christian, who says to me, "I want to tell you how much the dear, sweet, old devil means to me."

You know, sometimes people tell us it's hard to be a Christian. Where did you get that? It's not hard to be a Christian. The Bible doesn't teach it's hard to be a Christian. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you*

rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28–30) That's what Jesus said. It's hard not to be a Christian. The Bible says, *"The way of transgressors is"—what?—"hard."* (Proverbs 13:15) "The way of the transgressor is hard." Hasn't the devil sold us a bill of goods?

Here we see Lazarus. Not only does Lazarus have freedom; he has fellowship. He is sitting there being refreshed at the table with the Lord Jesus. And that is illustrative of the fact, ladies and gentlemen, of the joy and the fullness of the life that Jesus gives. You see, Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life,"—that is, "I want to add years to your life"—"and that you might have it abundantly." "I want to add life to your years. I want you to have an abundant life, a wonderful life."

IV. A Rejected Life

And so, the life that Jesus gives is resurrection life. The life that Jesus gives is released life. The life that Jesus gives is a refreshed life. But I want you to notice something else. The life that Jesus gives is a rejected life. Not everybody was happy with Lazarus. I want you to look, as we continue to read, in chapter 12, verses 9 and 10: *"Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only,"*—they knew that Lazarus was there— *"but [they came] that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead."* Lazarus was a point of conversation. And many people now were going to Bethany and they were saying, "Have you seen him?" "Have you seen who?" "Have you seen this guy that was raised from the dead?" And they were coming from Jerusalem and all about to see him. But now, notice verse 10: *"But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death."* (John 12:9–10)

Now they wanted to kill Lazarus. What was it that they had against Lazarus? Well, Lazarus was connected with Jesus. And because of Lazarus, Jesus was getting the glory. Now I want you to go back to chapter 11 and look in verse 53—and the Bible says, *"Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."* (John 11:53) Now, there it's talking about Jesus. In chapter 11 and verse 53, they wanted to put Jesus to death. Now, in chapter 12, verse 10, they want to put Lazarus to death. Do you see the connection? Jesus said, "The servant is not better than his master." (Matthew 10:24) "If they've hated me, they'll hate you." (John 15:18)

Now I've been telling you the good part. I've been telling you it's a resurrected life. I've been telling you it's a released life. I've been telling you it is a refreshed life. I want to tell you it's also a rejected life. There is no possible way that you can live this resurrected life and be in favor with this vile world that crucified Jesus. Christians are twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and you're going to be going against

the tide all of the time. “Those that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12) Somebody has said, “The trouble with modern Christians today is that nobody wants to kill them anymore.” Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you.” (Luke 6:26) There is no possible way that you can live for the Lord Jesus Christ without being rejected by this world.

Now, Satan doesn't worry about the average Christian. But these people were worried about Lazarus. Because of Lazarus, people were coming to Jesus and were giving praise and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't worry when people say something bad about you. Don't worry when people hate you. It doesn't particularly bother me when some people speak poorly of me. I never go around trying to get any opposition: enough of it comes without trying. But I'll tell you there's something very wrong when all people speak well of you.

I used to hear Dr. Robert G. Lee, the pastor of this church, speak in our evangelism conferences, and he would say, “One of these days, somebody's going to preach my funeral.” I never dreamed it was me. But he said, “One of these days, somebody's going to preach my funeral, and when he stands over that casket, if he says, ‘Here lies dear old Dr. Lee: he never had an enemy,’” he said, “I pray God He'll give me the power to kick the lid off that coffin and say, ‘That's a lie!’—‘That's a lie!’”

Man is known by the enemies that he makes. Friend, if you're a friend of Jesus, you're going to be the enemy of this world. The life that Jesus gives is a rejected life. And if you're not willing to face the scorn, if you're not willing to take the shame that comes from loving and knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, perhaps that's one reason you've never given Him your heart and your life.

V. A Respected Life

But let me say, last of all, that the life that Jesus gives is a respected life, as well as a rejected life, for continue to read here in chapter 12 and verse 11—and it goes on to say that they sought to put him to death, “*Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*” (John 12:11) Isn't that great? Because of Lazarus and the life that Lazarus had, many people were believing on Jesus.

You know, I'd like to believe that many people believe on Jesus because God raised Adrian from the dead. I would like to believe that you could see in me something supernatural. I would like to believe that you would say there's something about Adrian Rogers—and I'm not trying to draw attention to myself, because it ought to be said about every Christian—but there's something about that man that cannot be explained. You see, the part of my life that you cannot explain is God. And I would just pray that you would see in me the life that Jesus gives. And there would be such a respect for the

life that Jesus gives that you would believe on the Christ that gave me life. You see, Jesus said we're to be His witnesses. But, friend, not only are we to be His witnesses; we also ought to be part of the evidence. That life ought to be so real in us.

You see, Lazarus lived with great abandonment. Do you know one thing that Lazarus was never afraid of from the time Jesus raised him from the dead? Dying. Amen? Dying. He never had to worry about dying anymore. I mean, he knew that he knew that Jesus had power over death. And, you see, strangely enough, *it is not until a man no longer fears dying that he's ready to live*. But the moment he no longer fears dying, the moment he learns what Jesus was saying, "I am the resurrection and the life, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." That is, our body may cease to exist, but Jesus demonstrated there at that tomb that He has power over death. He has the keys of death and of hell. And we never have to fear death. And when we live so that people cannot intimidate us with the fear of death, whatever it is, at that moment our lives begin to be respected, and there's power; and many people are going to believe on the Lord Jesus, because we are supplying not only a witness, but we're supplying the evidence.

Conclusion

Now I don't know what your problem is tonight, but I know who your answer is tonight: it's Jesus! I want you to imagine with me that man who was brought to Jesus on a pallet. Remember there were four people who brought that man to Jesus. And they made a hole in the roof and let that man down. Do you remember that story? That's not here, but it's in another place in the Bible. Now I want you to use a little sanctified imagination with me, a little *Adrianology* tonight. I want you to imagine that those four friends go to this man who is paralyzed, and they say to him, "We want to bring you to Jesus."

And we don't know the names of those four men, and we don't know who they were, so let's just imagine who they might have been. And this man who's paralyzed says, "Well, it won't do you any good to bring me to Jesus: He can't do anything for me." And one of the men we'll say was the man whose eyes Jesus had opened. And he says, "Well now, wait a minute. Jesus opened my blind eyes. How do you know Jesus can't do something for you?" "Oh," he said, "there's no comparison between blindness and paralysis. You were just blind in your eyes. I'm paralyzed all over." Then, another man of the four steps forward to give his testimony. He says, "But wait a minute. I had a withered arm, and Jesus healed my withered arm." He says, "That's just your arm. I'm paralyzed all over. I don't believe He can do anything for me." And then, another man steps forward, and he says, "But wait a minute. I had a dumb tongue. I couldn't speak,

and Jesus loosed my tongue and I could speak.” “Oh,” he said, “that’s just the organ that’s in your mouth. That’s just your tongue. But I’m paralyzed all over.” And then, a fourth man steps up to give his testimony. He says, “May I introduce myself to you? My name is Lazarus.” Amen?

Now, listen. I don’t care what your problem is: the God that can raise the dead is the God who can solve your problems. “My name is Lazarus.” Many believed on him because of the testimony of Lazarus.

Now, friend, Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*” (John 5:24) Would you like for the same thing to happen to you spiritually that happened to Lazarus physically? Jesus, through this preacher tonight, is calling you, and He’s saying, “Come forth.” Will you hear His voice and come? And will you let the Lord Jesus Christ tonight restore you, revive you, resurrect you? Use whatever word you want. Would you let Jesus give you life tonight? He will. And you can pass from death to life. Now, without Him you’re dead in trespasses and sin. Through Him, you can have life abundant, full, and free.

This Is Your Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 21, 1982

Main Scripture Text: John 11–12

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

JOHN 11:26

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Introduction

John chapter 11—we're continuing our series on "A Parade of Miracles." You will remember that John, who wrote the Gospel of John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, gave us at the close of his gospel both his motive and his method of writing the gospel. His motive was *"that [you] might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing [you] might have life through his name."* (John 20:31) That was his motive. But what was his method? He said, *"Many other signs did Jesus... But these are written, that [you] might believe that [he] is the Christ."* (John 20:30–31) And so, his method was to select seven miracles. And these are special miracles—miracles with a message, signs with a significance, miracles that Jesus performed—but you need to look beyond the miracle to the message. You need to look beyond the sign to the significance.

Today we're going to be talking about the last of those miracles: the raising of Lazarus from the dead. But let's quickly recapitulate and look back. Remember the first

miracle—that was the changing of water into wine. And that showed us that Jesus Christ is God’s answer to man’s discouragement, because wine in the Bible symbolizes joy, and the wine had run out, because mankind without Christ has no joy. And then, Jesus that day became the life of the party, and He has been ever since, amen? So, Jesus is God’s answer to man’s discouragement.

And the next miracle that we see was the healing of a nobleman’s son. And this nobleman had difficulty believing, and Jesus remonstrated with him and said, “*Except [you] see signs and [miracles], [you’ll] not believe.*” (John 4:48) And then, Jesus said, “*Go thy way; thy son liveth.*” (John 4:50) And the Bible says, “*And the man believed the word.*” (John 4:50) And so, that tells us that faith is taking God at His word and that Jesus Christ is God’s answer to man’s doubt—man’s discouragement, man’s doubt.

The next miracle was the healing of a man who was paralyzed completely. The Bible calls him “impotent.” (John 5:3) He had been lying there by the pool of Bethesda, and he could not move himself; he could not help himself. And Jesus said, “*[Would you] be made whole?*” (John 5:6) And then, Jesus said, “*Rise, take up [your] bed, and walk.*” (John 5:8) Here was a man totally disabled, and Jesus gave him strength. And that tells us that not only is Jesus Christ God’s answer to man’s discouragement and man’s doubt, but He is God’s answer to man’s disability. Here was a man completely disabled who received strength through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, Jesus fed the five thousand with a few loaves and a few fish. What a miracle that was! But oh, the message and the miracle was that Jesus is the Bread of Life; and so, He is God’s answer to man’s desires. What you’re yearning for—what you’re hungry for—whether you know it or not, dear friend, is Jesus. You need Jesus. You’re hungering for Jesus.

*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 DIXON LOES

Jesus is God’s answer to man’s desires.

And then, after that, Jesus opened the eyes of a man that was blind. And what was the meaning of the miracle? As He performed that miracle, He said, “*I am the light of the world.*” (John 8:12; 9:5) Jesus is God’s answer to man’s darkness.

Blindly they strive for sin darkens their way.

Oh, dear friend—

One glimpse of Jesus and all will be bright!

So, Jesus is God’s answer to man’s darkness.

And the next miracle was Jesus walking on the water. You remember the night the storm came: the disciples thought, “We’re going under,” and then they saw Jesus walking on the water. And He taught them that night that everything that looked like it was going to be over their heads was already under His feet. Amen? And what is the meaning of the miracle? That Jesus Christ is God’s answer to man’s despair. What a wonderful miracle that was!

And then we find, finally, the next, or the last, miracle, which is Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, which tells us that Jesus Christ is God’s answer to man’s death. This is the crowning miracle. This is the last of these seven in a parade of miracles.

Now, let’s begin to read in chapter 11, verse 1: *“Now a certain man was sick”—this is John 11, verse 1—“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, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”* (John 11:1–4)

Now, if you don’t see Jesus glorified in the raising of Lazarus, you’ve missed it all. What is the meaning of the miracle? Just go right on to verse 25, and here’s the meaning of the miracle: *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”* (John 11:25–26) You see, Jesus said, *“I [have] come that [you] might have life, and that [you] might have it...abundantly.”* (John 10:10) Now, there are seven things I want you to notice in this story of Lazarus, and they will apply to all of those of us who will receive the Lord by faith into our hearts this morning or who have already received Him.

I. A Man Dead

The first thing I want you to notice about Lazarus is that he was a man dead. Look in verse 14: *“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”* (John 11:14) That is, Lazarus got sick, and then he died. Now, I don’t know what caused his death, but I do know this: that no matter what was right with him, there was one thing wrong with him—and that is he was dead. And because he was dead, it really didn’t matter what was right with him. Do you understand what I’m talking about? You see, dead is dead. And don’t tell me about all your good points if you’re dead. It doesn’t make any difference how handsome you are; it doesn’t make any difference how large you are; it doesn’t make any difference how rich you are—if you’re dead, you’re dead.

Now, some people fail to understand this. You know, it’s amazing that dead people go around comparing themselves with other dead people. You know, Jesus raised three

from the grave. He raised a little girl who just had been dead only a few moments. He raised a young man who had been dead a few hours, and He raised Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. Now, which was the most dead? You see, dead is dead.

Sometimes we look at a person who is an adulterer, a whoremonger, a drunkard, a dope addict, a murderer, and we say, “Oh boy, they’re dead in trespasses, in sin.” I want to tell you something, friend: those people are no more dead in trespasses, in sin, than your little daughter is who has not yet received Christ, if she is at the age of accountability. I’m not talking about little children now who have not yet reached the age of accountability. You see, look, there may be degrees of corruption, but there are no degrees of deadness.

And some of you think you don’t have a testimony because, you know, you didn’t take a Ph.D. in sin before you got saved. You were saved as a junior child. It took just as much of the grace of God to save you as it did that old drunkard—and never forget it, dear friend. Dead is dead, and dead people need to stop comparing themselves one with another. The Bible says in the book of 1 Timothy, chapter 5, verse 6: *“She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”* (1 Timothy 5:6) Did you know there are a lot of dead people listening to me today? *“She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”* (1 Timothy 5:6) And the Bible speaks in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18, of people who are *“alienated from the life of God.”* (Ephesians 4:18)

See, sometimes people don’t understand what life and death are in the Bible. In the Bible, death is not the separation of the soul from the body. I mean, if my soul were to leave my body right now, I wouldn’t be dead. Now, some doctor might come up here, perform the test, and say, “Well, I hate to tell you this, but the pastor is dead,” but that doctor would not be telling the truth.

Look again in verse 25. Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”*—that means when you believe in Christ, you leave and you come out of the deadness of your sins to life in the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, notice verse 26—*“And whosoever liveth”*—that’s me—*“and believeth in me”*—that’s still me—*“shall never die.”* (John 11:25–26) That’s still me. I’ll not die. Now, you might say I’m dead, but I’ll be kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory, amen? I won’t be dead. How can I be dead when Jesus said, *“[He that] liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”* (John 11:26) We just simply move out of our body and we move right on to be with the Lord.

I told my Discovery Class this morning about a man named Peas who died. They put him in the grave, and somebody put this epitaph on his tombstone: “This ain’t Peas; it’s just the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God.” Amen? *“To be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 5:8)

Now, there are a lot of people that we describe as being alive and they’re not alive;

they're dead. I mean, their heart may be beating, but they're dead. *"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."* (1 Timothy 5:6) And that's the reason that Jesus came to talk to people whose hearts were beating, and Jesus said to people who could see, and who could hear, and who could talk, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

And so, here was a man. There was just one thing wrong with him, so there was nothing right with him. Somebody was telling me last night at supper that they were listening to the Donahue Show a couple of weeks ago, and said that there was a woman on the Donahue Show and they were talking about Christianity and talking about the Church. My, how they love to do that! And this woman said, "Well, I am a devoted Christian, but I certainly haven't been born again." Isn't that strange? That would be like a person saying, "Well, I'm a healthy person, but I don't have any life." You see, look, friend, you can't be a Christian without being born again. That's a contradiction in terms. You see, there are a number of people who think they're so fine, but there's just one thing wrong with them, so there's nothing right with them: they're dead. And Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

So, dead people need to stop comparing themselves with one another. There may be degrees of corruption, but there are not degrees of deadness. Now, Lazarus may have been dead for four years; that little girl may have been dead for four minutes—it makes no difference: dead is dead. And if you don't have Christ, you don't have life.

II. A Man Delivered

Okay, now, the first thing I want you to notice, therefore, is here was a man dead—verse 14. Secondly, here was a man delivered. Look, if you will now, in verse 38 of this same chapter. Are you ready? All right: *"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he had been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 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, here's the reason for it all: not just to raise Lazarus. Oh, if you don't see this, friend, you miss it all—*"that they [might] believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth."* (John 11:38–44) Now, let's stop right there. Here was a man who was dead and now is a man who is delivered.

Now, let's have a lesson in how to raise the dead, okay? You want to learn how to raise the dead? Let's see what we might do if we got somebody dead now and we want to raise him. How do you raise a dead person?

1. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Example

Well, I'll tell you one thing we might try: we might try an example. We'd just set an example of how a living person ought to live. And we'd just come around him, and we'd just be alive as we could be around him. Do you think a dead person is going to be changed by example? No, of course not! But you'd be surprised how many people in our churches today say, "Well now, what I want to do where I work is just so live that people will see my example and through my example come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior." Friend, they're not saved by your example; they're saved by the gospel. Don't you know that? I'm not saying that you ought not to live as an example. I'm going to get to that in a moment, because Lazarus did later become an example, but it takes more than an example to raise a dead man. You can't set a live man before a dead man and say, "Now that's the way you ought to act."

As a matter of fact, dear friend, if you are living, on your job, the Christ life, and you do not give Jesus openly and verbally the credit for the life that you're living, you're taking praise under false pretenses. Did you know that? Listen, the life that you live is by the power of the Son of God. And if you don't give Him the glory, you're sinning against Him by living a life that you could not live by yourself and you're not giving Him the glory for it. But friend, it's not an example that this world needs, not even the example of Jesus. You see, *salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ but by receiving life from the death of Christ*. An example is not the way to raise a dead man.

2. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Education

Well, somebody else says, "All right, education—let's educate him; let's give him a book, put it in his hands: *Twenty Lessons on Life*. Let's play a tape there alongside of him and educate him." And you'd be surprised how many churches are trying this. And people trudge to the church Sunday after Sunday, and they're getting education. Nothing wrong with education, but I tell you, dear friend, if you're dead, it won't do you any good. Education cannot raise a dead man.

3. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Environment

Well, let's see if we ought to try something else. If example won't do it and education won't do it, perhaps an environment. Let's put him in a real live setting and change his environment. And you'd be surprised how many think, "Now, what we need to do—we need to take these folks and take them out of that bad environment and put them in a good environment." If I'm in a bad environment, I want to be put in a good environment.

But friend, *man needs something more than soap and soup; he needs salvation.* And, you see, Adam fell in the Garden of Eden. You can't get in a better environment than that. And you take a dead man and put him a room full of living people, and it's not going to make them alive. You see, environment is not the answer. But the environmental behaviorists think that if you change the environment, you change the man, but you do not.

4. You Can't Raise a Dead Man by Encouragement

You can't raise a dead man with environment. You cannot raise a dead man with example. You cannot raise a dead man with education. You cannot raise a dead man with encouragement. Now, suppose we get alongside of him and say, "Hey, fellow, come on! Get up! You can do it! You really can! Come on now!" He's not going to pay any attention to you. And a lot of people think, "Well, we just need to put our arms around these folks, and what they need is encouragement."

5. You Can Only Raise a Dead Man with the Word of God

No. How do you raise a dead man? Not by encouragement, not by example, not by environment, not by education. How do you raise a dead man? Do you want to know? With the Word of God. Now, pay attention. Look at this now. Look in verse 43: "*And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*" (John 11:43) And the dead came forth at the sound of the voice of the Lord. The same God who created this world created it with His voice. The Lord spoke, and it was so. The same God that made everything to begin with, with His Word, is the God who has power to give life through His Word.

Now, look in John chapter 6. I want to show you a very key verse. And I've been trying to get this point across in all of these things: the power of the Word of God. Now, go back to John chapter 6, and let's look in verse 63: "*It is the spirit that quickeneth*"—do you know what the word *quickeneth* means? It means "to be made alive." "It is the spirit that gives life"—"*the flesh profiteth nothing*"—you can't raise a dead man with education, environment, example, and encouragement. "The flesh profits nothing." Well, all right. How is the spirit going to give life? Now, pay very much attention; just put a star by this verse—"*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*" (John 6:63) Pay attention: "*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*" (John 6:63)

How do you raise a dead man? With the Word of God. Let me tell you something, friend: I hold in my hand this morning a book that has power to give life to the dead. And that's the reason the Apostle Paul said in Philippians chapter 2, verse 16, that we are "*holding forth the word of life.*" (Philippians 2:16) Do you know what I'm doing this morning? I have in my hand a supernatural book, and this book has power to call forth

the dead. And I can preach the gospel, and through this book there can be a miracle of life. The words of Christ are in this book, and Jesus said, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* (John 6:63) And I have in my hand today an instrument that can raise the dead. And Jesus is saying to you today, *“Come forth.”* Do you understand that? Not Adrian—I’m just the Western Union boy. My sermon has no power to convert anybody. I’ve told you before, and I’ll tell you again: *anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of*, but *“the words [of Jesus] are spirit, and...are life.”* (John 6:63) And that’s why we must preach the gospel. We’re *“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”* (1 Peter 1:23)

This is no common book; this is no ordinary book. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) *“The words that I speak unto you...”* (John 6:63) How was Lazarus raised from the dead? Jesus said, *“Lazarus, come forth.”* (John 11:43) And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that Jesus is saying the same thing today. And there are some Lazaruses in my congregation this morning. And when I get finished preaching this message, I’m going to take the Word of God, and I’m going to say, *“Lazarus, come forth,”* and I’m hoping that many of you here today will hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth.

Did Lazarus have a choice that day so long ago? Could he have decided that he wanted to stay in the grave? Could Lazarus have said, *“Well, never mind; I’d just rather stay here in my corruption and my decay?”* Did he have a choice? I know not. But I know one thing, ladies and gentlemen: you do today. Today you can say *“yes”* or you can say *“no”* to the voice of the Son of God as He calls you forth.

III. A Man Defeated

First, a man dead; secondly, a man delivered; thirdly, a man defeated. Look in verse 44 again: *“And he that was dead came forth”*—now wait a minute; we’re not expecting this—*“bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.”* (John 11:44) Here’s a man defeated. Here’s a man who has life. But I want you to imagine that scene today. That must have been something when Jesus said, *“Lazarus, come forth.”* (John 11:43) I’ll guarantee you one thing: every eye was riveted on the dark mouth of that cave. And after a while, a white form appeared, and it was Lazarus. But Lazarus had been wrapped around and around and around and around and around with linen cloth, as they buried people in that time. And he was bound like this: his hands are tied to his side; his feet are wrapped together. There’s a tight cloth wrapped around his face. He cannot see. He can hardly breathe. He cannot talk. He can hardly walk. He cannot lift his hand. And boys and girls, this is the way Lazarus came out. Can you imagine that?

Now, what was the Lord teaching there that day? And what do we need to learn here today? O God, help us to see it. Here was a man who was not dead, but he was defeated. And how bewildered he must have been! He was like many of you here today who know that you've been saved, and yet this is the life you're living—so defeated! You see, Lazarus could not walk; he was bound. He could not work; he was bound. He could not witness; he was bound, and he needed to be set free.

What do those grave clothes represent? They represent, ladies and gentlemen, the relics of his deadness. They were painted with corruption. They were relics of death. And they were the leftovers of the old life, still clinging to him. Do you know anything about that? I mean, those of you who have said “yes” to the Lord Jesus, those of you who have trusted the Lord to save you, and yet it seems like your life is bound, and you don't have the liberty and the freedom that you ought to have, and you have those old grave clothes of the old language.

Before I got saved, I had a filthy mouth—and I'm ashamed to say it, but it's the truth—and a profane tongue. It must have been some deep inferiority in me that made me talk that way. But I gave my heart to Christ. Jesus called me forth from the grave of my deadness and my corruption. And I heard the voice of the Son of God, and I received life through His Word. But I went along for a week or two, and then something happened. I don't remember exactly what it was—maybe I hit my thumb with a hammer—but out came those old words. Oh, how it hurt me! How it grieved me! Do you know what that was? Those old words were the grave clothes of that old life. Many of you know what I'm talking about: old language, old lust, old laziness, old loves—they cling to us, and they bind us.

IV. A Man Disentangled

And so, here was a man dead. Here was a man delivered. Here was a man, however, defeated. But wait a minute; let's continue to read. Here was a man disentangled. Here, continue to read. Look—verse 44: “*And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*” (John 11:44) Hallelujah! A man disentangled—here was a man who was to be set free. I want you to learn this lesson this morning, and learn it well, from the life of Lazarus: the same Lord that gives you life gives you liberty. Have you got it? The same Lord that said, “*Lazarus, come forth,*” (John 11:42) was the same Lord that loosed him and let him go.

Look in John chapter 8. You are in John 11. Turn back to John chapter 8, and let's look in verse 32. Jesus said, “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” (John 8:32) And then, look, if you will, in verse 36: “*If the Son*”—that is, the Son of God—“*therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*” (John 11:36) I'm

speaking to some people who are free, but not free indeed. I'm speaking to some people who have life, but they don't have it abundantly. I'm talking to people who have been saved, but they're still bound. And oh, if you only could only understand that not only did the Lord come to give you life; He came to give you liberty, to set you free. The songwriter says,

*He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.*

—CHARLES WESLEY

Hallelujah!

The Lord Jesus said, *“Loose him.”* (John 11:44) But wait a minute: to whom did He say, *“Loose him”*? He didn't say to Lazarus, *“Lazarus, set yourself free.”* He gave a command to those standing there: *“Loose him, and let him go.”* (John 11:44) Do you know what the job of the church is? To unwrap the saints. Amen? To unwrap them.

Now, this morning we gave the invitation, and a number of Lazaruses came forth down this aisle. Now, that means we've got an assignment to these people. Do you remember how hard it was when you first got saved? Do you remember the grave clothes of your old life? Do you remember those old habits, those old loves, those old lusts, that old laziness—all of those things that bound you? That's why we need the church. That's why we need one another. We have a commission to unwrap the saints, to loose them and let them go. And none of you can say that you don't need the church, and none of us can say, *“It's none of our business.”*

I thank God for those who unwrapped me. Thank God for them. And I know that I was bound up, as a new Christian. I know that the grave clothes of that old life were clinging to me, and I was bound hand and foot. But it wasn't God's plan that I be bound with my eyes covered so I could not see, with my mouth covered so I could not speak, with my hands tied so I could not work, with my feet hobbled so I could not walk. Oh, hallelujah! Jesus said, *“If the Son...shall make you free, [you'll] be free indeed.”* (John 8:36)

V. A Man Dining

But now, I want you to notice something else. We see a man dead. We see a man delivered. We see a man defeated. We see a man disentangled. And now, look in chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.”* (John 12:1–2) They made Jesus a supper. Martha served, and Lazarus

sat at the table with Jesus. A man disentangled, and now a man dining, a man sitting at the table with Jesus. And oh, don't fail to understand why this is in the Scripture. Don't think that this is just incidental, that it doesn't matter. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* (2 Timothy 3:16)

What is the Bible telling us here? Here's Lazarus, who has been raised from the dead, and he is now fellowshiping with the Son of God—and that's the purpose of it all. Dear friend, salvation is not merely that you get your sins forgiven; salvation is not merely that you come out of the grave; salvation is not merely that the grave clothes fall away; but salvation is that you might have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Do you remember what David said? *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."* (Psalms 23:4–5) Do you remember what Jesus said in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20? He said, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and"*—do what?—*"[have supper] with him, and he with me."* (Revelation 3:20) You see, this speaks of the fellowship that we're to have. Friend, don't miss the fellowship with Jesus.

Do you know, so many people think that that being saved is some sort of a penalty you have to pay in order to get to heaven. It's not, friend. It's wonderful knowing Jesus. People say, "Oh, it's hard to be Christian." Where'd you ever get that? It's not hard to be a Christian. The Bible says, *"The way of [the transgressor] is hard."* (Proverbs 13:15) It's hard not to be a Christian. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28)

I've said it before; I'll say it again: *if I had a thousand lives, I'd give Jesus Christ every one of them.* I don't mean that there's no self-denial. I don't mean that there'll not be any pain. I don't mean that there'll not be any sacrifice. But friend, I want to tell you, in Jesus, even these things are wonderful and glorious, and there is *"joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Peter 1:8) I would be a Christian if there were no heaven, if there were no hell, just to know Christ in this life. Don't you ever let the devil get you to thinking negatively about God. Listen, there is a fellowship that is wonderful, full, rich, and free. And Christ said, *"[I've] come that [you] might have life."* (John 10:10)

You know, so many people get the idea that when they come to Christ they're being invited to a funeral. No, Jesus invited Lazarus from a funeral—amen?—to a feast. He went from the tomb to the table. Don't you know? People are afraid of giving up their life, and Lazarus said, "Well, I'd just like to have life, but I hate to give up this old, rotten, stinking tomb; I hate to give up these grave clothes." No, ridiculous. The only thing that Jesus Christ asks you to give up are the things that hurt you. He invites you to have

fellowship with Him. He invites you to sit at the table with Him, to know Him, to love Him. *“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.”* (Psalms 84:11) Hallelujah! What a Savior! The devil wants you to think negatively about God. Don’t you do it! I’m inviting you to something wonderful. Christ didn’t say, “I’ve come that you might have death”; He said, “I’ve come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10) And the happiest people and the most fulfilled people on the face of God’s green earth are those who come forth from the grave of their corruption, who have been set free from the grave clothes of the old life and have found liberty and love and life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. A Man Dangerous

And so, Jesus is sitting at the table, dining with Lazarus. So, we see not only a man disentangled; we see a man dining. But, wait a moment. There’s something else I want you to see. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10 of chapter 12: *“Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there”—that Lazarus was there—“and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead”—I can imagine why. I mean, everybody will say, “Did you hear that? There was a man dead. He’d been buried four days, and corruption had already set in. And this man named Jesus called him from the grave, and he came forth.” And it was noised abroad. He was almost like a sideshow. They were coming to see him that had been raised from the dead. But notice verse 10—“But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.”* (John 12:9–10) Now, that’s strange: they want to kill him again. They got together, and they wanted to kill Lazarus. Why did they want to kill Lazarus? Because he was bringing such glory to Jesus, and he was an irrefutable proof of the power of Jesus Christ; and because of that, he was dangerous to them. Here was a man who had been disentangled, a man who was dining who is now a man who was dangerous. He was a man who was disturbing.

And don’t you think that when you give your heart to Jesus everybody’s going to love you—they’re not. Don’t think this world is going to love you when you get saved. This world will break your neck if it can. You see, the world hates every Lazarus who has life because he just shows up how dead people really are without a Lazarus, and they hate him. You see, we’re people twice born in a world of once-born people, and we’re going to be going against the tide all the time. And if you think that the world is getting more churchy, it’s just that the Church is getting more worldly. You let a church really stand for the Lord Jesus, you let a real Lazarus come forth—I’m talking about one who has been set free from the old life; I’m talking about someone who’s dining with Jesus; I’m talking about someone whose life is so radically changed that people all around know

that God is in business—and this world will try to snuff you out, friend. They don't like that. They don't like you because you're different.

The world's not going to embrace everybody. Jesus said, “[Beware] when all men...speak well of you!” (Luke 6:26) They're not going to speak well of you. There was a crowd that hated Lazarus. I don't think of any of us ought to desire to be hated, but I'll tell you one thing, friend: we ought to be so different that we will disturb this ungodly world. And people ask me, “Brother Rogers, is the world getting better or worse?” Do you know what my answer is? “Yes.” You're going to see, as the world gets darker, the saints will get brighter and the conflict will get sharper. Are you ready for it? It's coming, as we get to the end of the age. But do you think that bothered Lazarus? Do you think that death ever, one more time, frightened Lazarus? Absolutely not! Why? How could death ever frighten a man who's now seen the power of Jesus Christ to raise the dead? I mean, he's completely unintimidated. You see, *when a man is no longer afraid to die for the first time, strangely enough, he's ready to live.* Here was a man who was not intimidated by all of this, but a man who was disturbing, because of the life that he had in Christ.

VII. A Man Demonstrating

One last thing: not only do you see a man disturbing, but you see a man demonstrating. Let's continue to read here in verse 9: “*Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there*”—this is chapter 12, verse 9—“*and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.*” (John 12:9) And now, notice verse 11: “*Because that by reason of him*”—by reason of Lazarus—“*many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*” (John 12:11) Hallelujah! Many of them said “yes” to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because He was an irrefutable proof of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. They looked at that man, and they said, “Only God could do that.” And they believed on Christ because of the life that Lazarus had. Lazarus was demonstrating the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, that's what we've been called on to do. There ought to be something about my life that so demonstrates the life of the Lord Jesus that you would see Jesus' life in me and want the life that I have. What is there about me that cannot be explained? If there's nothing about me that cannot be explained, I don't expect you to believe it or receive it; but if you can see in my heart and in my life something supernatural, it ought to be proof to you that Jesus has done it. *Every Christian ought to be more than a witness; he also ought to be part of the evidence,* amen? Lazarus was more than a witness; Lazarus was a part of the evidence. Lazarus was so changed.

Pay attention to me now; listen to me now. I've been preaching long enough to know

this: that the best argument for Christ, and the best argument against Christ, is the life of a Christian. Oh, when God's people start living like they've received supernatural life, friend, that brings conviction more than anything else that I know of.

As a matter of fact, this morning we had a man walk down this aisle of this church and give his heart to Christ—a man that I've been praying for for three years, and others have been praying for. And last night I had the privilege to get on my knees with that man and pray with that man as he received Christ as his personal Savior. And one of the things he said to me was this: "Pastor, I could see in the lives of those people that are members of this church a quality that I do not have—something I don't have and something that I need." You see, what he saw was the life of the Lord Jesus that caused him to come. On the other hand, when one of God's children go around, even though they have life, they're still bound in the grave clothes, they don't testify for the Lord Jesus, they don't live like a Christian, it causes people to want to turn away from Christ.

Friend, not only should we be witnesses; we ought to be evidence. There ought to be a changed life that demonstrates the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there about your life that is supernatural? What is there that causes you to love your enemies? What is there that causes you to go the second mile? What is there that causes you to live godly and righteously? What is there that gives you peace in the midst of the storm? What is it in you that allows you to praise God so supernaturally? That's what the Lord is looking for. And I'll tell you, when they saw in Lazarus this kind of a life, they could not deny it. Here was a man demonstrating.

I want you to use a little sanctified imagination. I want you to imagine four men. Do you remember the Bible says there was a paralyzed man that was brought to Jesus, and they carried him on a litter, sort of a stretcher, and there were four corners to his bed, and they picked him up and brought him to Jesus? He was a man totally paralyzed. Do you remember the man they let down through the roof? Now, I don't know who those four were, but let's just use a little imagination. Let's just imagine that they're going to him, and they say, "Hey, we're going to take you to Jesus, and Jesus is going to heal you." Suppose he says, "No, it won't do you any good to take me to Jesus because I am paralyzed and there's no hope for a man like me." And suppose one of them steps forward to give his testimony, and he says, "But wait a minute. I was blind, and Jesus opened my blind eyes." And this man says, "Yes, but you're just blind in your eyes; I'm paralyzed all over." Another one steps forward, and he says, "But I was deaf, and Jesus opened my ears." He says, "Yes, but that's just your ears; I'm paralyzed all over." Another one says, "I could not speak, and Jesus loosed my dumb tongue." "That's just your tongue; I'm paralyzed all over." Then let's imagine a fourth one steps up to give his testimony and said, "May I introduce myself to you? My name is Lazarus." Amen? The argument ceases.

Conclusion

Listen, friend, I don't know what your problem is, but I know the Christ who can raise the dead has the answer, amen? The Christ who can raise the dead has the answer. This is the crowning miracle of these miracles. This is the last miracle in a parade of miracles to say and to teach us what the Gospel of John is written to teach us—that Jesus is the Christ; and that we believe on Him, we have life through His name; and that, as Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection, and the life.”* (John 11:25)

Look back again in chapter 11 and verse 25. Look at it, because in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to respond to what chapter 11, verse 25 says. Look at it: *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me”*—and that's the way it happens, friend—*“he that believeth in me, though he were dead”*—not physically dead; that's not what He's talking about. Here is the meaning in the miracle: though he is spiritually dead—*“yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”* (John 11:25–26)

Today, ladies and gentlemen, you can come forth from the grave of the old life—today—by believing in the name of Jesus. Through the power of the Word of Jesus you can receive life so that you will never die, you will not go to hell, you will have life now, and you will have life hereafter. You will have everlasting life; you will never die. Your body will go to the grave, but your spirit will go directly to be with the Lord Jesus. And you can have life that Jesus promises. For Jesus said, *“I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10)†

The Abundant Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 15, 2004

Main Scripture Text: John 11:25–26, 43–44

Outline

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 1. Society Tries by Example
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- IV. Express Faithfulness to Jesus

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Introduction

Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, it doesn't get any better than that. Thank you for that great music. And, I love the subject—and that is, Heaven. And, one day, we'll exchange that old rugged cross for a crown. What a day that will be! Take God's precious Word, if you would, and turn to John chapter 11—John chapter 11. And, I want us to look at a couple of verses as we begin, and then we're going to go back and look at more verses in detail.

How many of you—don't lift your hand—but would like to live victoriously? I mean, how many of you would like to live the way the Bible teaches? Now, so many of us think that these sermons and these lessons are something disconnected with us, and we have no more intention of being truly changed by them than we have being changed by some program that we watched on television. And so, the worship service is sort of a semi-entertainment and worship service, but you're not expecting to be changed. And, Disraeli said that "youth is a blunder; old age, or middle age, or manhood a struggle; and old age a regret." And, Shakespeare said—and I know all of us are wonderful students of Shakespeare, but I did find this quote—Shakespeare said that life is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"—*Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5. Well, that's what some people feel about life. But, Jesus said, "[I've] come that [you] might have life...and have it...abundantly" (John 10:10).

Look at this passage here now—verse 25: "*Jesus said unto her, I am the*

resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25–26). Now folks, if you want to live before you die and live after you die, then I want to tell you four steps now that you might take—four principles that you might apply that will help you to have, truly, an abundant life. Now, this is not pop psychology. This is absolute truth from the Word of God.

I. Exercise Faith in Jesus

Number one: You must exercise faith in Jesus—you must exercise faith in Jesus. That's when life begins. John 11, verses 25 through 26: *"Jesus said...I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"* (John 11:25–26). Now, Jesus said, "You exercise faith, and you will live forever."

Now, Lazarus was a man that Jesus loved. Jesus loved to go to a home there just over the Mount of Olives. I've visited that place many times in Bethany. And, He had some friends there: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. And, they were very special to Jesus, and Jesus would go and abide with them. And then, Lazarus got sick. You know the story: they sent for Jesus to come and heal him, but Jesus delayed (on purpose) until Lazarus was dead. And, they scolded Jesus. Mary and Martha said, "Why didn't You come?" And, Jesus said, "I know what I'm doing." And then, He said to those people, "Roll away the stone." And, look in verse 43: *"And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth"* (John 11:43). And, out of the mouth of that tomb came Lazarus.

Now, why this miracle? Why doesn't God raise all of the dead? I mean, can we just, in the name of Jesus, raise up the dead? No, we wouldn't bring them back if we could and couldn't if we would. They're in a far better place than this. So, why did this miracle take place? It is an illustration. Say "illustration." It is an illustration of our greater spiritual life.

Now, in John chapter 20—you might put this in your margin—verses 30 and 31, John tells why he gave this miracle story. As a matter of fact, there are seven miracle stories in the Gospel of John. Now, Jesus did many other things, but John takes seven of them from changing water into wine right onto the raising of Lazarus, and each one of them illustrates a special point about salvation. Now, look, if you will, in John 20, verses 30 and 31: *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"* (John 20:30–31). That's the reason I'm saying that, first of all, you must exercise faith in Jesus

that, believe it, you would have life in His name.

Now, Lazarus was dead. Now, there were many things right about Lazarus, but there's one thing wrong about him: he was dead. It didn't make any difference how well they had him dressed. It didn't make any difference how much money he had in the bank. It didn't make any difference how many friends he had. He was dead. That's the one thing that was wrong with him: he was dead. Now, the sad thing is that there are people in this congregation that are dead. You don't know you're dead, but you are dead. And, you're dead in trespasses—in sins. There others of you who have loved ones who've gone to Heaven, and you say they're dead. They're not dead; they're more alive than they have ever been, leaping, and dancing, and praising Jesus face to face. We need to understand what death is. Well, one of these days, as I've said, I'm going to die and you're going to die. I would invite you to my funeral, but I don't know if that would be very nice for me to do that, because I won't be there—I won't be there. This body of mine that will be laid in the grave will be there, but *to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.*

I had a dear friend in Fort Pierce, Florida. He was a great man of God. His name was Charles Fisher. Everybody called him Uncle Charlie. Uncle Charlie was one of the most eccentric, lovable, courageous men that I've ever known. He was just a little wiry guy about that high, but oh, he was so excited about Jesus. There came a time for Uncle Charlie to die, and Uncle Charlie said to his son Lee—he said, “Now, when you have my friends there, invite all of my friends—the saved and the lost. Invite them to my funeral.” And, he said, “When they're all there, you don't have to do anything else—just push the button on this tape player. That's it. That's my funeral. Just push the button on this tape player.” And Lee, who was going to obey his daddy... And, this was a man I knew and loved very much. And so, Uncle Charlie was gone to Heaven, and Lee pushed the button on the tape player. And, it said, “Hello, friends. This is Uncle Charlie. I'm up here in Heaven. It's wonderful in Heaven. I want you to come to Heaven with me, and here's the way that you can know the way to Heaven.” He preached his own funeral—preached his own funeral—because he was not dead, really. “He, being dead, lives” (Hebrews 11:4).

Now, there are some people who are dead—and some dead people in this building. Your heart is thumping. Your blood is circulating. Your mind is thinking. But, you're dead. Do you know what the Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 6? *“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives]”—“she that liveth in pleasure”* (1 Timothy 5:6). That is, a person who has given his or her heart over to licentiousness—they are the walking dead. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 18—put it in the margin: he speaks of these *“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God”*

(Ephesians 4:18)—just dead, alienated from the life of God.

I had another friend, Byron Richardson. Byron was the Associate Director of Evangelism at the Texas Baptist Convention. He told a story that I think I shared with you a long time ago, but it's so poignant to what we're talking about right now. Byron and his wife were having a vacation, and they were driving through the Great Smoky Mountains. You know how beautiful that is. Well, his wife looked over at the gas gauge and said, "Byron, we need to stop and get gas." "Oh," he said, "we've got plenty of gas. Don't worry about that." How many of you men have done that? "We've got plenty of gas. Don't worry about that." And so, they're driving through the Great Smoky Mountains, and they got out of where the town was; and they got into this national forest or park or whatever is there—I think they call it the Blue Ridge Parkway. And, he's going on this thing, and his wife has gone off to sleep. And, the sun has gone down, and he's looking at this gas gauge; and it's about to move all the way over to the left-hand peg. So, he says, "I'll stop and get some gas." But, there was a major problem: there were no gas stations. He's out there alone—or, with his wife—but no gas stations. And, he begins to panic. He said, "O God, if we go out of gas on this dark road out here, my wife will kill me. She told me—she told me—to get gas. Please, God." But, there was not a gas station nowhere.

And finally, he saw a little country store, and there was a light on inside; and there was one single, solitary gas pump out in the front. And, it one of these old kinds that, you know, they put in collector's items with the tube on the outside and so forth. "Oh," he said, "I hope that's not just decoration." He pulled in, and he asked the mountaineer there, "Do you sell gasoline?" He said, "Yep." He said, "That's wonderful. I want some gas." And, the old man came out—the mountaineer—and began to put the gas in the gas tank. And, Byron just thought, "Oh, this is wonderful. Look at this mountain air. Lord, it's so wonderful." And, he said to the man, "It's great to be alive, isn't it?" The mountaineer never even lifted his head. He said, "I don't know. I've never been any other way." Well friend, I want to tell you, I have been another way. I was dead in trespasses and sins, and I can tell you, it is great to be alive. Some of you today have existence, but you don't have life. Now, you may be dead and not know it. You may think, "Well, the dead people are those people into drugs, and prostitution, and all of that."

Do you know that Jesus raised three from the dead? He raised a little girl who had just died, He raised a young man on the way to his funeral, and He raised Lazarus—those three. Now, you think about that. How did He raise that little girl? She had just died, and Jesus went back there in the bedroom and said, "All the rest of you just stay out. You don't believe." But, Jesus took that little girl and said, "Darling, get up!" That's

what He said: “Young maiden, arise. Darling, just get up.” She woke up. Her body was still warm. And then, Jesus raised a man—a young man. He was on the way to the funeral; he was on the funeral bier. He was being transported. Now, he was dead also, but his body was cold. *Rigor mortis* had set in, and Jesus raised him. And then, Jesus raised Lazarus. Lazarus had been four days in the grave. Corruption had already begun. The stench of death was there. And, God raised Lazarus. I want to ask you a question: Which one was the most dead? Dead is dead, friend—dead is dead. It doesn’t matter whether you were like that little girl, or like that young man, or like Lazarus. Dead is dead.

Now, some of you have little children in your home who are old enough to know Jesus. Maybe you have a granddaughter. I want to tell you that granddaughter is as lost as the worst criminal on the face of this earth without Jesus. There may be degrees of corruption, but not degrees of death. Dead is dead. So, you need to stop comparing yourself to other people and saying, “I’m better than him. I’m better than her.” That’s like a lot of dead people saying, “You’re more dead than I am.” Dead is dead. Lazarus was raised from the dead. And, that takes a miracle for God to do that.

Now friend, how do you raise a dead man, anyway? How would we do it? Well, if we got the social engineers today, they would try the four big E’s. Here’s what they are:

1. Society Tries by Example

“E” number one: by example. And, everybody thinks what everybody needs is a better example. “Let Jesus be our example.” Jesus did not come to be your example; He came to be your Savior. And, salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ but by receiving life by the death of Christ. And, so many people think, “Well, everybody needs a better example.” I like examples. Examples are good, but they won’t raise the dead.

2. Society Tries by Encouragement

Then, other people say, “Well, to raise the dead is by encouragement.” Now, we have a dead man out here, and we want to raise him. We say, “Come on, boy. Get up! You can do it! Atta boy, come on! You can do it!” You know we have these philosophers today who say, “You can do anything you want to do if you just really apply yourself to it.” Well, a dead man can’t. You can encourage him all you want.

3. Society Tries by Environment

And then, another person says “by environment—we need to change the environment.” Well, if you take a dead man out of a cemetery and put him in a party, he’s still dead—still dead. Environment’s not going to change anything. Now, I believe in a good environment. And, I’m in many degrees an environmentalist. But, I’m about 95%; these

other 5% whackos—they bother me. And, I like a good environment, but environment will not raise the dead. I want to tell you, friend, man got into difficulty in the best environment ever known—the Garden of Eden. Man needs more than environment.

4. Society Tries by Education

Others say, “Well, the answer is education. Give him a good education. Give him 20 lessons on life.” That’s not going to change him. He needs a miracle.

So, Jesus comes to Lazarus. Lazarus is dead, and Jesus is ready to perform that miracle. And, how does He do it? Well, He does it with His Word. Jesus said, “*Lazarus, come forth*” (John 11:43). I want to tell you one thing—I wasn’t there, but I know this much about it: every eye was riveted on the mouth of that tomb when Jesus said, “*Lazarus, come forth*” (John 11:43). And, how did He raise Lazarus? Listen very carefully: with His Word—with His Word. He spoke. Oh, the power of the Word of God! Philippians chapter 2, verse 16 calls it “*the word of life*” (Philippians 2:16). John chapter 6, verse 63: Jesus said, “*It is the spirit that quickeneth*”—that is, “makes alive”—“*the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*”—“*they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). Friend, look up here. Here’s the Word of God, and it is the Word of life. Jesus said, “*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). What brought Lazarus forth? The Word of Jesus, when He said, “*Lazarus, come forth*” (John 11:43).

Now, Lazarus was already saved at this time. That wasn’t when he got saved. That was only an illustration that he has been saved, because he was saved by believing in Jesus before he went into that tomb. And, he heard the voice of Jesus, saying, “*Come forth*” (John 11:43). Now, what is the secret of abundant life? It is to experience life and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

II. Experience Freedom Through Jesus

Now secondly, not only should we have life through faith, but we need to have freedom—freedom—through Jesus. Look, if you will, in John chapter 11, now, and verse 44—I love this: the Bible says, “*And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. [And] Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go*” (John 11:44). I love that. Now look, folks—you talk about a horror movie. This... I don’t know what Hollywood could do with this. Here is Jesus saying, “*Lazarus, come forth*” (John 11:43).

Now remember, he is wrapped round, and round, and round, and round with linen very tightly. He’s like this, and he comes out of that grave. Can you imagine what that must have been like? Now, here’s this man—the one they thought was dead, the one they thought whose body was already decaying. He walks out of the grave like this.

Now, like that he couldn't work, he couldn't witness, he couldn't sing, he couldn't praise. He's all wrapped up; he's all tied up. You would not have wanted to have him home for dinner like that with the stench of death on him. But, Jesus, looking at him, said to those round about, *"Loose him, and let him go"* (John 11:44). Now, not only do we need life through faith in Jesus; we need, friend, liberty and freedom through Jesus. We need to experience freedom through Jesus.

Now, what our Lord wants to do once we get saved is to loose us. You know, many of us, when we got saved, we came out of the tomb with the grave clothes on. And, you know that is true. You have some things like that in your life: they didn't leave immediately. You had some old loves. You had some old language. You had some old lusts. And, you might even think that you're not saved because you still have the grave clothes on. That doesn't mean you're not saved. You've got to *"grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

Put in your margin "James chapter 1, verse 21": *"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls"* (James 1:21)—that is, "deliver your soul." Now, there's a word in there that I know that you're going to use every day—*"superfluity of naughtiness"* (James 1:21). You use that all the time, don't you? Well, what does that mean? It means "that which is over, superfluid"; it means "that which is in excess," and it literally means "that which is left over." Now, see, when we get saved, we receive life through the Lord Jesus Christ. But, all of us have the grave clothes of the old life. Maybe you got saved, and you hit your thumb with a hammer and out came those old words. Or, you're in a grocery store, and there's some salacious literature; and your eye wants to go to it, and you wonder, "Lord, have I been saved at all?" Yes, if you've trusted Jesus—if you have exercised faith in Jesus—then you're saved. But, what you need to do now is, friend, initiate freedom in Jesus. *"Loose him, and let him go"* (John 11:44).

Do you know what the job of this church is? For one thing, it's to unwrap the saints. There are a lot of people here who need to be unwrapped. There are a lot of people here who do not have freedom. I want to tell you about Jesus, the One who gives us life, gives us liberty:

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me (Charles Wesley).

Jesus said in John 8, verse 32: *"[you] shall know the truth, and the truth [will set] you free"* (John 8:32). Wouldn't you like to be free—I mean, have liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ? John 8, verses 36: *"If the Son therefore...[makes] you free, ye shall be free"*

indeed” (John 8:36). Well, I want to be free, and free indeed.

III. Enjoy Fellowship with Jesus

Now, here’s a third thing—here’s a third thing. I’m going to give you four of them. Number three: I want you to enjoy fellowship with Jesus—life from Jesus, liberty through Jesus, and now fellowship with Jesus Christ. Enjoy fellowship with Jesus. John chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead”—past tense—“whom he raised from the dead. [And] there they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him”* (John 12:1–2). Now, he’s gone from the tomb to the table. They’re having a banquet; and Jesus is there, and Lazarus is there. And, the Bible points out that Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus. Hard to know who was the guest of honor that day—whether it was Jesus or Lazarus. Can you imagine the fellowship there must have been at that table?

I want to tell you something: being saved is not some sort of a penalty that you pay in order to get to Heaven. When I invite you to come to Jesus, I’m not inviting you to a funeral; I’m inviting you to a feast. You know, the Bible is full of feasts, stories of suppers. Jesus is saying, “Come and dine—come and dine.” 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 will [have supper] with him, and he with me”* (Revelation 3:20). “I’ll come in as the guest, and then I’ll become the host.” You see, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, friend, Jesus bids you to come and have fellowship with Him.

So, the first step is you put faith in Jesus; then you have freedom through Jesus. And then, you have fellowship with Jesus. Are you having that fellowship? All morning I’ve been praising the Lord, and I can tell you Jesus is as real to me as that man sitting over there and those two guys over there—just that real. I don’t see Him, but Jesus is a friend, and I feast with Him and fellowship with Him. Oh, if you only knew—if you only knew! You know what the devil wants to do? The devil wants to get you thinking negatively about God. Precious friend, God is good all the time, and He’s saying to you, “Come and dine—come and dine.”

IV. Express Faithfulness to Jesus

Now, here’s the fourth thing I want you to see: you need to express faithfulness to Jesus. Now, Jesus is there having a meal with Lazarus, but there were some other people there who didn’t like Lazarus at all. Look, if you will, in John chapter 12, verses 9 through 11: “Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from

the dead”—now, they came to see Jesus; they also came to see Lazarus because he had been raised from the dead. Now, notice in verse 10—*“But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death”*—this is a joke, friend—*“that they might put Lazarus...to death”*—it’s a joke to me. Understand that. It’s the Word of God—*“that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus”* (John 12:9–11). Now, the reason I say it’s funny to me—they had threatened Lazarus with death. Lazarus said, “Been there, done that. Now, what’s next?”

I mean, look, death held no terror for Lazarus. When a man is no longer afraid to die, for the first time, he’s ready to live. Lazarus knew that he knew that Jesus was the resurrection and the life. And, Lazarus, and his testimony, and his loyalty, and faithfulness to Jesus caused many other people to believe. He was exercising faithfulness in Jesus. When they came to intimidate him, these chief priests and so forth said, “You can’t speak in His name.” That didn’t slow Lazarus down at all. And, I want to ask you today, are you exercising faithfulness to Jesus? Are you afraid of what people think? You don’t want to carry your Bible to work? You don’t bow your head in a restaurant, and pray, and thank God because you’re afraid that somebody might be looking—somebody might be watching? Friend, let me tell you something: *the best argument for Jesus and the best argument against Jesus is the life of a Christian.* “They came...[to] see Lazarus...whom [Jesus] had raised from the dead” (John 12:9). And, there were people being saved because they could see in Lazarus supernatural life.

What is there about you that is different than the rest of the people who live on your street? What is there about you that cannot be explained apart from a miracle? The only right that we have to ask anybody else to believe in our Savior is something they cannot explain in our life. You see, we’re to be witnesses. But, not only are we to be witnesses, friend; we’re to be examples. I mean, we are the evidence as well as the witness of the changed life. Is your life changed? *“If any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). I want to say again, there was no way that they could intimidate Lazarus. Death held no terror for him. He is disturbing to the very people in Hell—those who hated the Lord Jesus Christ and his faithfulness to Jesus.

Now, let me just kind of wrap this up today and talk about the abundant life that we have. We exercise faith in Jesus. We experience liberation through Jesus. We enjoy fellowship with Jesus. And then, we exhibit faithfulness to Jesus. That’s all right here. That’s what we do. Now, what does that mean to you? What does it mean to me today? Is this just a sermon? You say, “Pastor, I got the outline down.” No, listen—God is

speaking to you today. If you've not exercised faith in Jesus, you need to do so. If you're still in the grave clothes, you need to get unwrapped. If you're not enjoying Jesus, you need to be enjoying the Lord Jesus Christ and feasting with Him. And, you need to be loyal to Jesus. Never, never, never, ever be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's your changed life that is the best testimony of all.

Now, what is the message here? Well, it's what I read to you to begin with—John chapter 11, verses 25 through 26: “*Jesus [saith] unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*” (John 11:25–26). Now, look up here. Put your eyes right here. You're looking at a man who cannot die. Go look in the mirror and say, “That person cannot die.” If you live and believe in Jesus, you cannot die. You may move out of the body, but *to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.*

I told what I'm about to tell now on a cruise ship one time, and a man wrote a song about it. It went to the top of the charts. It was called, “My Name is Lazarus.” We've done this here before. And, I just imagine Lazarus as that paralyzed... Why, I imagine the paralyzed man in the Bible who was brought to Jesus on a stretcher. And, this man was totally paralyzed. Now, this is all just my imagination, but I think you'll get the point. And, this man is so pessimistic. He thinks there's no hope for him. And, one man on one corner of the stretcher said, “Look, I was blind, and Jesus opened my eyes.” He said, “But I'm paralyzed all over.” Another one said, “Look, I had a withered hand, and Jesus straightened my arm and my hand.” And, the man said, “But I'm paralyzed all over.” Another said, “I was deaf, and Jesus opened my ears.” He said, “But I'm paralyzed all over. There's no hope for me.” Then, the fourth man steps up and says, “My name is Lazarus.” Come on! You didn't get it. “My name is Lazarus.” And, if Jesus can raise the dead, He can save anybody here today—anybody. *There's nobody here so bad he can't be saved—nobody so good he doesn't need to be saved.* Dead is dead, whether you're freshly dead or corrupted. Friend, Lazarus was not only giving a witness, he was part of the evidence—a transformed life.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Now, have you exercised faith in Jesus? Have you? Well, this is the time for you to do it. I want to tell you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus will save you today and He will keep you saved. Jesus is not a probation officer; Jesus is a Savior. He will see you through all the way. Now, you might have to be unwrapped. You might have some hangover sins for a while, but He will save you. And, the One who gives you life will give you

liberty; and you can feast with Him, and you can witness for Him.

Now, you might be a boy or a girl here today, and you're not saved. Let me help you to be saved. You might be an older person. You might think, "I'm too late for this." It's never too late with God. Let me invite you to pray a simple prayer. Pray like this: "Dear God, I am dead in trespasses and sins. I want a new life. I want to be saved so I can have fellowship with You and live with You. Jesus, You said You're the resurrection and the life—if I would believe You, I would never die. I do believe in You, Jesus. Right now—right now—in this chair, I receive You as my personal Savior and Lord. Forgive my sin and save me, Lord Jesus"—pray it from your heart; exercise faith in Jesus—"Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, I want you to thank Him. Don't look for a sign or ask for a feeling. Just stand on His Word, and thank Him this way: "Thank You, Jesus, for saving me. You're now my Lord and Savior. Teach me to love You, teach me to serve You, and help me, Lord, never to be ashamed of You. In Your holy name. Amen."

Now, look up here. I'm believing that many of you prayed that prayer here this morning. You may be already be a member of this church. Unfortunately, some church members never really understood how to be saved. They were good folks in their own minds and the minds of their neighbors when they joined the church, but they never really, honestly, honest-to-goodness got saved. You need, today, to trust Christ. And then, listen—you may be here for the first time in this church, and you might say, "Well, you know, I need Jesus, but I need to wait 'til I get more acquainted with the church." Friend, it's not the church that saves; it's Jesus. This may be the last opportunity you'll ever have to give your heart to Jesus. It may be your first time here, but it may be your last opportunity.

Others of you are intimidated by the devil. He whispers in your ear and says, "You'll never make it. You're too bad. You don't deserve it. You'll never be able to live it." Listen to me: he is a liar. Jesus died for you on the cross, and Jesus said, "Whosoever will may come" (Revelation 22:17).

Now, if you prayed that prayer with me and really meant it, I'm going to ask you to come forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister of this church to welcome you and receive you. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister under that banner over there that says, "Redeemer," under this one over here that says, "Messiah," in the corner of the balcony, to welcome you. You just move that way. "Now Pastor, why do you want me to come forward?" Because the Bible says, "*Let the redeemed of the LORD say so*" (Psalm 107:2). The Bible says, "*With the heart [we] believe unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Romans 10:10). Walking the aisle doesn't save you, but what it indicates is what saves

you—that you have trusted Jesus and you show it by not being ashamed of Him. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of Me, I’ll be ashamed of you” (Mark 8:38). So, there’s something about a public confession of faith that seems to settle it and seal it. It shames the devil and gives glory to God. That’s why I want you to do it.

Now, there are others of you here today—you need a church home. We want to be your church home. If this is where you worship and where God speaks to you, most likely this is where you need to belong. So, if you’re already saved and you need a church home, I want you to come forward right now. As a matter of fact, you try to be the first ones coming forward. You come and say to the minister, “I want to place my membership here.” You can say it another way, but I just want to give you something to say: “I want to place my membership here.” And, we’ll tell you how to become a member of this wonderful church.

Some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” Now, respectfully, I’m going to ask that nobody leave during the invitation unless it is an absolutely emergency. I want us all to be in a spirit of prayer. Let’s stand together—let’s stand together—now, as we begin to sing. Listen, right now—right now—I want you to step out and come, this very moment.

The Abundant Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 15, 2004

Main Scripture Text: John 11:25–26, 43–44

Outline

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Introduction

Well, I told the first service it doesn't get any better than that. Laurie, that's just wonderful. And, I thank God that she believes what she sings. It's not a performance, but it is a real message from God.

Now, I want you to take your Bible and open to John chapter 11. I'm going to speak to you about the abundant life. Now, there are many people who have existence, but they don't have life. Disraeli said, concerning the way that some people live, "Youth is a blunder, manhood is a struggle, and old age a regret." And, you know, that's true in the lives of many people. They are existing, drawing their breath and drawing their salary, fighting to live while they live to fight, but they don't have real life. Shakespeare said life is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Well, not if you know the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, "*[I've] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly*" (John 10:10). I'm talking to you today about victorious living—abundant life. Did you know you can take the word *live* and turn it around—do you know what it spells? Evil. So many of us are living backward when we need to live as Jesus wants us to live. And, there are many in the Church, as we're going to see, who are not living truly victorious lives, but they are saved.

Now, I want to give you four principles this morning from our passage of scripture. But, let me give you the background for our passage of scripture, first of all. There was

a family in Bethany, right over the Mount of Olives. I've been to this town many times, where three people lived: two sisters and a brother—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. And, Jesus would often go there and fellowship and feast with them; and they loved Jesus, and Jesus loved them. But, one time, when Jesus was away on a journey, Lazarus got critically ill. And so, they hurriedly sent to Jesus and said, "Come. Lazarus is at the point of death. Come and heal him." But, Jesus deliberately delayed, and Lazarus did die. And then, when Jesus got there, Mary and Martha began to scold Him and say, "If You had been here, he would not have died."

Now, I want you to look here in John chapter 11 and verse 25: "*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die*"—and then, He asked this question. I want to ask you this question also—"*Believest thou this?*" (John 11:25–26). Do you really believe that? Would you like to have this abundant life—this victorious life? Four principles:

I. Exercise Faith in Jesus

Number one: You must exercise faith in Jesus—you must exercise faith in Jesus. Now, notice again that verse: it says, "*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*" (John 11:25–26). "Believe, believe, believe"—He keeps on saying it. We must exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, when Lazarus came forth, he came forth at the word of Jesus. John 11, verse 43—and Jesus would raise Lazarus from the grave. I'm going to say more about this later. But, I want you to get this right now how Jesus raised Lazarus: "*When he [had] thus...spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth*" (John 11:43). Now, when you read the story, you're going to find out that Jesus prayed out loud for a particular reason. He didn't need to pray out loud for God to hear His prayer—God the Father. But, He said, "I did it for their sakes, that they might believe." This is a great lesson here. And, let me say this—that this entire story (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and Lazarus's death, Lazarus being in the tomb for four days, Lazarus being raised—all of it), though it literally happened, is a parable telling us how to be saved.

Now, in John chapter 20—you might want to put it in the margin—verses 30 and 31, it says, "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book*"—but now, listen—"*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [you] might have life through his name*" (John 20:30–31). Now, why the Gospel of John? Why? Why? Why? For one reason—"*that [you] might believe that Jesus is the Christ*" (John 20:31). And, when you

do, you have life in His name. That's why the Book of John was written. Now, if you study the Book of John, you're going to find out that there are seven miracles in the Book of John. And, John picked these miracles out. He said, "There are many other things that Jesus did, many other signs that Jesus did, but these are done that you might believe" (John 20:31). And so, the resurrection of Lazarus—the bringing forth of Lazarus from the grave—is a tremendous sign—a tremendous illustration—to tell us how we can have abundant life.

Now, how did Jesus bring him forth? Jesus just spoke. The Bible says that by the word of His mouth He spoke. Look, if you will, in, well, all of these scriptures here. But, "*The words that I speak unto you*"—Jesus said—"*they are life*" (John 6:63). And, life comes through the Lord Jesus Christ and through His Word.

Now, let me ask you a question: Those of you whose minds are working today, whose bodies are functioning, whose heart is pumping, do you have life? You say, "Yep, I'm alive today." Well, you may not be—you may not be. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 6: "*But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives]*" (1 Timothy 5:6). Now, maybe some woman here today—and your heart, your mind, is not really on God. You're trying to please yourself. You're not truly saved, and you are part of the living, walking dead. And, Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18 says that your "*understanding [is] darkened, [and you are] alienated from the life of God*" (Ephesians 4:18). So, your heart may be pumping, but you do not have life.

I shared with you many years ago a story that's one of my favorites about Byron Richardson. Byron was the Associate Minister of Evangelism in the Texas Baptist Convention and a great man of God. Byron and his wife, one day, were taking a vacation in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. And, they were driving along. It was one of those perfect evenings. But, she said to him, "Byron, you need to stop and get some gasoline. Look, we're running out of gasoline." Byron did the thing that most men would do. He said, "That's all right. Don't worry about it. I'll get some gasoline at the right time. We have plenty in the tank." She went off to sleep. The sun went down, and he found himself on the Blue Ridge Parkway looking for a gas station. Friend, there were none, and that gas gauge went over and over again until it was at the peg and he was driving on fumes. He said, "If I run out of gas on this dark road, when she wakes up, she will kill me—she will kill me," because she said, "Get some gas." He began to pray, "O God, let there be a gas station somewhere. Please, Lord."

And, he made a turn in the road and looked, and there was a little country store there. He looked for a gas pump, and there was one pump out there—one of those singular pumps, the old kind they used to have with the glass casing around it. And, many of them now are just in collector's stores and so forth. But, he said, "I hope that's

more than decoration.” He went in the little store, and he asked the man, “Do you sell gasoline?” He said, “Yep.” He said, “May I buy some?” He said, “Yep.” And so, he went outside, and stuck that nozzle in there, and began to pump the gas into Byron’s tank. And, when he did, Byron was so thrilled. The mountain air was there. He’s getting the gasoline. His wife would never know his foolishness. And so, he just lifted his arms and said, “Thank You, Jesus. Thank You for all of this.” And, he was so full of joy that he said to the old mountaineer, who had the nozzle there with his head down—he said to him, “It’s great to be alive, isn’t it?” And, the old mountaineer said, “I don’t know. Never been any other way.” Well, I have been another way: I was dead in trespasses and sins, and I can tell you it is great to be alive. It’s great to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

Now, some of you say, “Well Pastor, I may be dead, but I’m not as dead as other people.” Friend, dead is dead. You need to stop comparing yourself with other people. Now, Lazarus was there, and there may have been many things good about him. But, one thing bad about him—he was dead, and that cancels out all the other good things. He was dead.

Jesus, in the Bible, raised three from the dead. He may have raised more than that, but we have the story of three. He raised a little girl who had just died, He raised a young man. And, they were taking that young man to bury him, so he is a little more cold than the little girl whose body was still warm. And then, He raised Lazarus. And, as we’re going to see, Lazarus’s body had been in the grave four days—not embalmed like we embalm. And, the corruption had already begun in the life or in the body of Lazarus. Now, I want to ask you a question: Of those three, which was the most dead?

You know, Jesus came to this little girl, and the Bible says He went in the back bedroom where she was, shut the other people out. They were mocking Him. He said, “Darling, wake up!” It’s a tender, precious picture in the Bible. And, this little girl stood up, and she was raised. Then, on this other occasion, Jesus broke up that funeral and raised that young man. Now again, there was no corruption really in his body, but his *rigor mortis* had set in. He was cold and stiff. And then, Jesus raised Lazarus, whose body had begun to decay. Again, I want to say to you: Which one was the most dead? They were all dead.

You know, the problem with many of us is we say, “Well, I’m dead, but I’m not dead like somebody else,” or, “I’m not as dead as you’re dead.” Friend, listen—the best person in this building today is just as lost as the worst person in the world if you don’t know Jesus. Dead is dead. Do you have that? Say “amen.” Dead is dead. Now, it’s a shame to be dead and not know it. *“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives]”* (1 Timothy 5:6).

A. **How Do You Raise a Dead Man, According to Society?**

Now, suppose you and I wanted to raise a dead man, or we got the social engineers here to raise a dead man. How would they do it? Well, four things that begin with the letter “E”:

1. **By Example**

They might try to raise this man by example. They might say, “Look at me. You see this life. See how I’m living. Now, if you will be like I am, then you’ll be raised.” Or, they might even use Jesus for an example: “Do you see the Lord Jesus Christ? Live as He lived.” Well, how’s a dead man going to do that? You know, there are some of you—you read in the Bible about how Jesus lived, and you say, “I can never, ever do that.” Well, you’re right. If it’s done, it’ll be done in you and through you by the Lord Jesus Christ. *Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ but by receiving life from the death of Christ.* Do you understand that? Example is not the way to raise a man.

2. **By Encouragement**

Well, you say, “Well, I’ll raise a dead man by encouragement.” And so, we just imagine a dead man up here on this platform, and we say, “Come on. Get up! You can do it! You can do anything you believe you can do. All you have to do is believe it, and you can have it. Come on now, right now. We’re waiting on you. We’re believing in you. Get up!” Do you think that if you have friends who are lost, that if you encourage them in their deadness but don’t point them to Jesus, they’re going to have life?

3. **By Environment**

Other people think that you raise a dead man by environment: “Put him in the right environment and then he will be saved. Take him from the graveyard and give him a party. Put a lot of happy people round about him.” He’s still dead. Environment is wonderful, and I am 95% an environmentalist, but the other 5% of these whackos drives me crazy. But, I want us to have a good environment, and I want to get people out of the slums; and I want people to live in good housing. But, environment is not the answer. Man got into trouble in the best environment the world has ever known—the Garden of Eden.

4. **By Education**

“Well,” somebody says, “then the answer is education.” You know, they say, “The answer to the world’s problems is education.” Well, Nazi Germany was one of the most educated nations on earth and yet followed Adolph Hitler. You see, education is not the answer. *If you take an ignorant man and he’s a thief, he may steal a watermelon off a boxcar. Give him an education, and he’ll steal the whole railroad. He becomes a clever*

devil.

So, you're not going to get people saved by these things. And, I'm telling you, all of the social engineering is based on those things—example, encouragement, environment, and education. But, it takes a miracle to raise a dead man. Do you believe that? It takes a miracle. Now, we're talking spiritually now. Jesus is not saying that you and I can run around and raise the physical dead, but what Jesus is saying—*“These things have I written unto you...that [you might] know that [you] have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13).

Now, how was Lazarus raised? By the Word of God. Jesus said, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43). Now, he'd already said in John chapter 6, verse 63: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth”—the word quicken means “alive, to make alive”—“the flesh [profits] nothing”—now, listen to this—“the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). When Jesus said to Lazarus, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43), there was life in His word. This book, friend, is not like any other book. This is a book that will impart life to you. The Bible says we're *“born again, not [by] corruptible seed, but [by] incorruptible, by the word of God, which [lives] and [abides] for ever”* (1 Peter 1:23). In Philippians chapter 2 and verse 16, the Bible calls this *“the word of life”—“the word of life”* (Philippians 2:16). So, you want to have an abundant life? First of all, friend, listen very carefully: you have to exercise faith in Christ. *“He that lives and believes in me shall never die”* (John 11:26).

II. Experience Freedom Through Jesus

Number two: Not only do you exercise faith in Christ, but, number two, then you experience freedom through Christ, or through Jesus. Now, look, if you will, in John 11, verse 44. Now, Jesus had said, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43). And then, in verse 44: *“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go”* (John 11:44).

Now friend, I wasn't there, but I think I know some things that happened that day. When Jesus said, *“Roll away the stone,”* they said, *“Oh, no, Lord. The stench of death is on him.”* Jesus said, *“Roll away the stone.”* Now, I wasn't there that day, but I believe that black hole—that cave where Lazarus was—every eye was fastened right there. And, Jesus said, *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43). No pleading, no shouting—just *“Lazarus, come forth”* (John 11:43). And, here comes Lazarus like a mummy, wrapped around, and around, and around, and around with cloth. His body is bound in cloth. There's a napkin over his face. He's like a walking mummy. He comes out of that tomb. Now folks, what would Hollywood do with a story like that? *The Night of the Living*

Dead. He comes out of that tomb like that. Now, get the point—get the point: he had already had life, but now he is bound in the grave clothes of his own life and he needs freedom. And, many of you have been saved, but somehow you're bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost. Calvary—Jesus died for us. In Pentecost, Jesus is in us. He comes in all of His fullness and all of His power. Now, are you living in liberty, or are you still living with the grave clothes wrapped around you?

I want to tell you about Lazarus when he had those grave clothes around him: he wasn't fit for walking, or working, or witnessing. You would not have wanted him home into your house for a meal with his grave clothes reeking of death, still wrapped around him. So, Jesus said, "*Loose him, and let him go*" (John 11:44). He needed liberty through Jesus. He needed to experience freedom through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, do you have that freedom? I mean, are you free in Jesus? Are you really? I mean, don't give me the rhetorical answer. Are you really free, or does sin have you bound? Let me give you a verse—James chapter 1, verse 21: "*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21). Now, he says, "There's something to lay aside. It is filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." You say, "Well, I'm glad you told me that, Pastor. I've been using that word a lot lately—'the superfluity of naughtiness.' What does that word mean?" It means "that which remains, that which is left over." We might call it *handover sins* from the old life.

And, many of us, when we got saved, we were all wrapped up—we were all bound. It didn't mean that we were not saved. Old habits, old language, old lusts—you may have gotten saved and then dropped a shovel on your toe, and you said some things you're ashamed of. A man said, "I used to call a spade a spade until I dropped one on my toe." You may be in one of the grocery stores or the minute markets, and you look up on the shelf, and there's a half-naked lady, and your eyes want to go toward that. And, you say, "If I'm saved, how can that be?" Sometimes you find yourself angry in traffic. And, what you need to realize is that doesn't mean you're not saved. It means that you have a superfluity of naughtiness. You have that remainder. You have that left over—relics of the old life—and you need to be set free; you need to be unwrapped. And, you know what one of the chief duties of a church is? To unwrap the saints. We need to stop being judgmental about new Christians who get saved, and then we say, "Well, they must not have been saved because they don't really live as they ought to live." Well, you might be saying more about you than you are them, that's bad, because our duty, our joy, our privilege, our responsibility is to unwrap them, to loose them, and let them go. I thank God for those who unwrapped me—I really do. I was thinking about this as I prepared this message, and I said, "Yep, there are some people who helped

get the grave clothes off of the old Adrian.”

Now, Jesus said in John 8, verse 32: *“And [you] shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). He said again, in John 8, verse 36: *“If the Son therefore shall makes you free, ye shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36). So, we are to exhibit freedom in Christ. And, I know many of you here today would like that freedom. I just thank God for the freedom that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we will accept it.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me (Charles Wesley).

And, precious friend, for you.

III. Enjoy Fellowship with Jesus

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see: not only do you need to experience freedom in Christ and exercise faith in Christ, but you need to enjoy fellowship with Jesus. Now, continue to read. Go on to chapter 12 now and look at verses 1 and 2: *“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus”—now, watch this—“which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. [And] there they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him”* (John 12:1–2). Now, he was raised; he was loosed. And now, he is at the table. He’s gone from the tomb to the table. He is fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is enjoying the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that salvation is not a funeral? It’s a feast. You know, there are people afraid to come to Jesus, afraid of what they’ll give up—have to give up. Precious friend, the only thing He will ask you to give up are the things that’ll hurt you or cause you to hurt somebody else. *“No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). God is a good God, and He wants to give us—He wants to give us—fellowship and enjoyment with Him. The devil wants you to think negatively about God. Can you imagine what it was, this feast? There’s Lazarus there, and Jesus is there. Mary and Martha are there, and they’re fellowshiping together.

Now, I’m going to invite you, in just a moment, to give your heart to Jesus, and I want you to understand this—that I am inviting you to something wonderful. You know, Jesus said, *“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 [have supper] with him, and he with me”* (Revelation 3:20). You see, that’s what salvation is: it’s dining with Jesus—it’s dining with Jesus.

Joyce and I, on an occasion, when Ronald Reagan was the President, got an

invitation to the White House for a state dinner. I didn't say "steak dinner"—a *state* dinner. And, a lot of dignitaries were there. How we got invited is still a mystery. But, we were invited, and we went to the White House for this state dinner. I'll never forget that, but friend, I want to tell you that is absolutely nothing compared to dining with Jesus—nothing compared to dining with Jesus. You know, in the Bible, Jesus is saying, "Come and dine to have fellowship with Me. How wonderful it is to have fellowship with Me!" And, the psalmist said in Psalm 23, verse 5: "*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies*" (Psalm 23:5). Would you like God to set you a table this morning? He'll do it. Friend, He's the cook. He's the maître d'. He's the fellowship of this meal—Jesus. How wonderful to enjoy this fellowship with Jesus!

IV. Express Faithfulness to Jesus

Now, here's the last thing I want you to see: and you need to express faithfulness to Jesus. Now remember, faith in Jesus—and that's very wonderful; and then you need to understand freedom in Jesus—that's very wonderful; and fellowship with Jesus—that's very wonderful. But, don't stop there. If you want an abundant life, the last step that I mention this morning is faithfulness to Jesus.

Now, look, if you will, in John chapter 12—this time verses 9 through 11: "*Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead*"—they wanted to see Lazarus. Now, Lazarus was a great witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. But, not only was he a witness; he was part of the evidence. They wanted to see Lazarus. But now, notice verse 10—"*But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus*" (John 12:9–11). Many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus because of Lazarus, because he had supernatural life upon him, and they could not explain it away. And, Lazarus gave Hell headaches. They wanted to put Lazarus to death again. That's always seemed a little humorous to me. They wanted to intimidate Lazarus with death. Now, you think about it: you think they could intimidate him with death? He said, "Look, been there, done that." I mean, he knew that he knew that he knew that sooner or later this body would deteriorate, and it did. But, he will be forever with the Lord Jesus Christ because he was different—he was changed. *The best argument for Jesus and the best argument against Jesus is the life of a Christian.*

I want to ask you a very serious question; I want you to answer it now: What is there about you that cannot be explained? I ask it to my own heart: "What is there, Adrian, about you that cannot be explained?" The part that cannot be explained is the only part that we have a right to ask people to believe. Do we have a supernatural life? I don't

mean we're walking on water and turning, water into wine. That just made me think of...I mean, water into wine.

Joyce and I were on this cruise here, and we went to our stateroom. And, there was a bucket of ice with some champagne or something in it. I don't know how to read those labels. It was sitting there. I didn't think about it. I just thought, "Well, I'll leave it there." But, I saw Joyce had written a note and said, "We do not drink alcohol. Would you bring us some water—some bottled water?" And, I thought, you know, that's the only person I've ever heard turn wine to water. So, we got the water. But, you know, listen—living a supernatural life is not something that you have to do; it's something that Jesus Christ does through you. And, when He does it, it is very, very disturbing to the devil and very convincing to the unsaved.

In a church I used to pastor down in Fort Pierce, the town drunk came to see me one time. He wouldn't mind me using his name because he used it many times. His name was Al Cross. Al Cross was the town drunk. He would work at his job, and when he got paid on Friday, he would go to the local tavern and drink until he fell off the stool. They would drag him out, maybe under a warehouse somewhere, and let him sleep it off. Al Cross came to me and said, "I need God in my life." He said, "I've been to all of these cures, and AA, and all of these other things," and I'm not putting that down, but Al said, "You know, I went in a dumb drunkard and came out an educated alcoholic." He said, "I never... Nothing has happened. I need God." Well, I prayed with Al Cross, and Al Cross got saved—I mean, good and saved. And, he immediately and dramatically changed. The grave clothes fell off in a hurry off of Al Cross. He became one of the best testimonies and witnesses that I've ever known in any church—a wise man, a faithful man, sharing Jesus. Anything that walked he'd testified to and witnessed to.

We had a little prayer meeting every morning in that church in Fort Pierce. I was on the radio at 6:45, and at 7:00 the men would meet at the church. And, we would pray and then play a little ping pong. And, we were concerned about our city and how we could have revival. And, one man said, "You know what I read? I read that the way to have revival is to get the meanest man in the city saved." Well, we said, "Okay. Who's the meanest man in our city?" And so, we had an election, and the man that won hands down was a man who was a bootlegger, a knife-fighter, a thief, and a gambler. This man—everybody was kind of terrified of him. So, they began to soak him in prayer. Then, they said, "Pastor, you're the one that's got to go and see him." So, I had a big lump in my throat, but I knocked on his door. He was in bed. He'd been shot in the hip. You know who shot him in the hip? His girlfriend, who was jealous of him because of the company he was keeping with his wife. This man stole a hog off the back of the game warden's truck. I mean, he was an industrial strength sinner. And, the first time I

went, I knocked on the door, and his wife came to the door. I said, “I want to see So-and-so.” She said, “Well, he’s back there with some friends drinking and gambling. I wouldn’t suggest that you go in.” So, I didn’t.

But, this time I knocked on the door again. She said, “He’s in there in bed. He’s been shot.” And, I went in. I said to this man, “Look, I’ve come to tell you about Jesus.” I, you know, I didn’t beat around the bush. “I want to tell you how to be saved and have eternal life.” You know what he said to me? He said, “If Jesus can do for me what he did for Al Cross, I want to be saved.” Now, see—that’s it. He saw in Al Cross something that could not be explained apart from the grace of God. The only thing you have any right to ask people to believe about your faith is that which they cannot explain. And, I want to tell you the meanest man in Fort Pierce got saved. I mean, he prayed like a baby to receive Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. He’d been soaked in prayer. He’d seen the example, and he had a witness.

Well, we need to live the abundant life. We need to express faith in Christ. We need to experience freedom in Christ. We need to enjoy fellowship with Christ. And friend, we need to express faithfulness to Christ.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, you might be one of those who, today, is part of the living dead. You have existence, but you don’t really have life, and you want to be saved. You don’t want to live on and on like this and then die and go to Hell. You want to be saved. And, I want to help you to be saved. I want to help you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. Let me tell you how to be saved: recognize you’re a sinner, confess that you’re dead in trespasses and sins, understand there’s nothing you can do to save yourself, know and believe that Jesus died on the cross to save you. He paid your sin debt with His blood—His shed blood on the cross. And, know that He has said that if you will believe Him, He will save you and He will keep you eternally. It doesn’t mean you’re going to sprout wings and get a halo. There’ll be some grave clothes that need to come off. But, the same Jesus that saved me and freed me will save you and free you. Father, I pray today that many in this building will say “yes” to Jesus Christ and trust Him. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you’re willing to do that—admit that you’re dead in trespasses and sins, believe that Jesus died on the cross to save you, believe it enough to make it public—I’m going to ask you to do something wonderful today—to leave your seat and come forward in this service. Standing at the head of each of these aisles is a friend—a minister of this church—to welcome you and receive you. If you’re in the balcony, there’ll be someone standing under that banner over there that says, “Redeemer,” or

this one over here that says, “Messiah.” Those of you in the balcony be making your way there. Those of you here, just make your way right down here to the front.

Say, “Pastor, I’ve never done that. If I’m coming to give my heart to Jesus, what would I say to that man?” Just say, “I’m trusting Jesus.” “Well, what will happen then?” Well, number one, we’ll rejoice, and all these people here will rejoice; number two, we will give you some scripture to stand on; number three, we’ll answer any questions we can answer; number four, we’ll seal it with you in prayer. It’ll take just a few moments. It’ll be the greatest thing you have ever, ever, ever done. And, Jesus will save you today, and the One who saves you is the One who’ll keep you. So, I don’t want us to look around to see what anyone else is going to do. I want you to come forward this morning if you’re the only one who comes. I want you to come if everyone comes. Just do what God wants you to do, and He will save you.

There are others here today I want to invite to come forward also. These are people who need a church home. You’ve moved here, or you live in a different neighborhood. You’re not active in another church, but you love Jesus. I want you to come and place your membership here. Now, God’s plan is that every Christian be a member of a local New Testament church—if not Bellevue, one somewhere. If this is where you worship and God speaks to you, then it’s probably where you need to belong. Husband and wife need to come. Young people need to come. Well, what will you say when you come down there? Well, you say to the minister, “I want to place my membership here,” and he’ll tell you how you may become a member of this glorious church. We would love to have you to come.

Now folks, we’re praying for you. No one can force you to do this. There are not enough demons in Hell or out of Hell to keep you from doing it if you want the Lord Jesus Christ. If you’re serious with God, if you want an abundant life, I’m going to ask you to leave your seat and come. Let’s stand together as we sing.

A Right Christmas

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 1, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 12:12–26

*“On the next day much people that were come to the feast,
when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.”*

JOHN 12:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Beware of a Superficial Christmas
- II. Beware of a Self-Centered Christmas
- III. Beware of a Shortsighted Christmas

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you open your Bibles please to John chapter 12? When you’ve found it, look up here. I want to say that I love the Christmas season. Now, I know that there are some people who actually believe that Christmas is pagan, that we ought not to celebrate Christmas. These are not people who don’t believe in Jesus; these are people who do believe in Jesus, and they tell us that it’s comes out of some midwinter pagan ceremony, and that Christmas literally means “Christ’s mass,” roots in Catholicism, and so forth.

Well, having said all of that, I love Christmas. I don’t apologize for loving Christmas, and, you know, the Bible says “one man esteems one day above another, another man esteems every day alike, but every man be fully persuaded in his own heart.” As a matter of fact, the days that we have today are named after pagan gods or deities. We worship our Lord on Sunday, but we’re not worshipping the sun. We live for Jesus on Monday, or moon day, but we’re not worshipping the moon. Thursday is named after Thor, and March is named after Mars, and January after the god Janus. But all of these things are things that have come upon us. But nonetheless, we know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This is the day, by consensus, that Christians have said we’re going to remember the birth of our Lord. Now, the problem is that there are a lot of pressures that come on us during the Christmas season, is that not right? I mean, we all get caught up in it, and we all love it.

Well then comes New Year’s, we make a lot of resolutions, we decide we’re going to

lose weight, right. He who indulges bulges. And, so then, we say, now, look what I've done: I've gotten out of my quiet time; I've gotten out of my exercise; I've gotten away from my diet; I've got my budget out of whack; and so, we start anew and afresh. I do it every New Year's. I make resolutions that go in one year and out the other, and I just try to get a fresh start. Well, what I want us to do tonight is kind of get a running start and get things under control early, so we can have a Christ-filled Christmas, a wonderful Christmas, what I want to call a right Christmas.

Now, I've looked for a parallel to our Christmas in the Scriptures, and the closest thing that I can find is a parallel to the way we celebrate Christmas is the way that the Jews celebrated Passover, because both of these were great festivals, times of great celebration, times when the nation, almost in totality, was involved in this thing called Passover. And both Passover and Christmas are centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, what I want to read to you now is the passage of Scripture that deals with Passover, but I'm going to make some Christmas applications, concerning this passage of Scripture.

In John chapter 12, beginning in verse 12: "On the next day, much people that would come to the feast,"—and when he says the feast, it means the feast of Passover, not just the meal, but the entire event that went on for many days, and they just called it—quote—the feast, "when they were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord! And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon as it is written, Fear not, Daughter of Zion, behold thy king cometh sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples of the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him and that they had done these things unto him. The people, therefore, that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from the dead bear record, for this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world has gone after him, and there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you, except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life should lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

I'm going to stop reading right there, and I want to make some applications of things that happened at this religious festival so long ago that remind me of things that happen today that are not right, and things that we need to be warned of if we would have a right Christmas. Three things I want you to beware of.

I. Beware of a Superficial Christmas

The very first thing I want you to beware of is beware of a superficial Christmas—beware of a superficial Christmas. Now, what had happened is they were having the feast of the Passover, and the feast of the Passover was about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb, and actually John the Baptist had already pointed unto Him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,” but there was Jesus who was being overlooked and not understood, to say the least, at that time.

Most of the people there in Jerusalem were there for three major reasons: some came for the pageantry—and there was much pageantry at the Passover, a lot of music, a lot of celebration, a lot of symbolism, very, very much like our Christmas. And I love pageantry. I love the Christmas pageant that we have here, the Singing Christmas Tree. I think there's nothing like it that I know of on the earth, and I thank God for it. I thank God for those who, as soon as this service is over, will begin to construct the set and the tree. I thank God for those who are practicing and getting ready for the pageant. But pageantry at Christmas, just as pageantry at Passover, can become empty form and ritual. Many of our Jewish friends still celebrate Passover today, but they're not looking for Messiah. They don't understand, they don't believe that Messiah is coming, and many of them who do not even claim to believe in God would still have the Jewish tradition of Passover. And many Gentiles who really do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah still love the pageantry of Christmas.

Some were there for pageantry. Some were there for profit, because at Passover, the inns would be filled, the restaurants or the hostels would be selling food, the suppliers of sacrificial animals would be selling sacrificial animals, there was a lot of commerce at Passover. It was one of the big commercial events of the year—again, very much like our Christmas time. And some enjoy Christmas because of the profit.

As a matter of fact, many merchants say if they don't make it at Christmas, it'll be a bad year, so they're measuring how much is sold at Christmas. And so, we get swept up in that. I heard of a department store that said to the children in one of their promotions, Now remember, children, if you get everything you asked for, you didn't ask for enough—and trying to get the kids to ask for more. And so, we go from jingle the bells to juggle the bills, and at the end of the time we're trying to catch up and make up for all that we have spent, and we walk around these department stores with our nerves frayed, our hearts pumping, our head throbbing. I don't know about you guys, but—I'm

talking to you gentlemen—I get tired when I go in the stores. I don't know what it is. I think I'm fairly healthy, but I think, what is that thing that takes the strength out of Superman—kryptonite? I think they put that stuff in the floor of those department stores, and when I get in there, my strength just goes out. If I were selling in a department store, especially if it was a ladies store, I would put a television set, some newspapers, a big soft chair, and a pot of coffee over there, and I'd say to the guy, now, sit down there and relax, and let your wife shop. I'd make a million dollars. If you go in to sit in one of these chairs, if there is a chair in there in one of those ladies stores, it's a little straight-back chair, and if you get a magazine, it smells like perfume, and nothing in it, and you have to sit out there somewhere where everybody's looking at you. But, anyway, that's aside. These, they're in the business, of course, to make money.

Some were there for the pageantry, and some were there for the profit, and others were there just for pleasure. Passover was a time of celebration. All the little Jewish kids looked forward in that day to Passover; they look forward today to Passover, and the same for Christmas. Do you know what folks look forward to at Christmas is gluttony; they look forward to—those who drink—towards drinking, and many look forward to immorality, and you know, it's a strange thing. The same crowd—Jesus on this Passover day came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and they were throwing palm branches in His pathway for the donkey to walk on, they were taking off their garments and strewing the pathway with their garments, and they were saying, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail Him! But the same crowd that was doing that in a week would be saying, Nail Him! The same giddy crowd.

Now, you think about if that doesn't remind you of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, we'll be singing Silent Night, Holy Night—I'm not talking about us, but I'm talking about the world, I'm talking about people in general—be singing Silent Night, Holy Night, and one week later at New Year's Eve they'll be singing Auld Lang Syne. And, one time, they'll be in the churches with the candles flickering, and then, they will be in the nightclubs the next on New Year's Eve. They will have gone from Bethlehem to Babylon. And that's exactly what people do in America today.

So what I want to ask you to do is beware of a superficial Christmas that leaves Jesus out. Passover was about Christ. Christmas is about Christ. I've written a book; it's a small booklet. It's just out. It's called Jesus, God's Unspeakable Gift, and this gift, this book, is done by Love Worth Finding Ministries. I believe we'll have them in the bookstore over here. I'd like for you to get one. I don't take any royalty or anything from the book; that's not it, I just wrote it for the ministry. I'm not trying to say I want you to buy a book to make me better off. I want you to have the little booklet. I'll tell you why I wrote it. I wrote it as a devotional guide for the month before Christmas. It is primarily for families, and it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it speaks of Christ as sovereign

Lord, as measureless love, as a guiding light, and as a saving lamb. All of these things have to do with Christmas. And there is a little devotional for every day of thirty days before Christmas, some Scripture to read, and then, there is a family activity that your family can do, and, especially if you have children, you will be blessed to get your children and do this family activity, and I will just almost virtually promise you that this can be the most Christ-filled Christmas you've ever known, if you just do this simple thing.

Now, I didn't ask Brother Curtis if he has these in the bookstore. I guess he does. I hope he does. If he doesn't, he ought to have, and will have. But anyway, this little booklet, I don't know what the cost is going to be, but, Jesus, God's Unspeakable Gift: a Christmas Devotional Guide. Now, the reason I want you to have that is I want you to beware of a superficial Christmas. I don't want pageantry and profit and pleasure to take the place of the Savior. Now, what happened here were these people were celebrating Passover, but I'm going to tell you, and the context makes it plain, that it was for them superficial.

II. Beware of a Self-Centered Christmas

Now, here's the second thing I want you to beware of if you're going to have the kind of Christmas you ought to have, and that is, beware of a self-centered Christmas—a self-centered Christmas. Most of us are wondering what are we going to get? And most fathers are spending all the time trying to convince the children that he's Santa Claus and convince his wife that he's not, and everybody's asking themselves, what's in it for me?

Now, continue to read here, if you will, in chapter 12, verses 20 and 22: "And there were certain Greeks among them, they came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired of him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." Now, you know what Christmas is a wonderful time to do? It's a wonderful time to tell others about Jesus, just as Passover was a wonderful time to tell others about Jesus. The Greeks were there; they didn't understand Jewish customs, and they did not understand the Messiah, but they were interested. And I can tell you that in every man's heart, if you're scratching deeply enough, he's interested in the things of God. Even those that say they're not, down deep they are interested; there's a God-shaped vacuum in every man's heart.

And so, here's all this festivity, and these Greeks, they were not of the household of Israel. Perhaps, they had heard about the teaching of Jesus, and so they come to Philip, and say, Listen, do you know Jesus? Would you introduce us to Jesus? And you know what Philip did? Philip found Andrew. Now, why did Philip find Andrew? It's a very

interesting thing. The Greeks come to Philip, and say, we want to see Jesus, and Philip says, Andrew, here are some people who want to see Jesus.

Now, why is that? Did you know that Andrew is mentioned only three times that I can find with something happening about him; I'm not just talking about a list of names—three times. And do you know what he's doing those three times? He's bringing somebody to Jesus. He found his brother, the Bible tells us, who was Simon Peter, and Andrew was the one who brought Simon Peter to Jesus. When they fed the 5,000, and Jesus had asked Philip, how are we going to feed these people? it was Andrew who said, there's a little boy here, he's got a lunch; and he brought that little boy to Jesus.

I love that man because there he was when everybody else was talking around with the big shots and the high muckety mucks; there's Andrew talking to a little boy. And he knew about that little boy; somehow he had become acquainted with that little boy, and he brought that little boy to Jesus. And now, the third time we find him, we find him bringing these Greeks to Jesus.

Did you know we don't find any recorded sermon that Andrew ever preached? We don't find anything that Andrew did significantly except this: he was bringing people to Jesus. And when you think about it, he didn't preach the sermon on the Day of Pentecost—Simon Peter did; but Andrew brought him to Jesus. He didn't serve and feed 5,000—a little boy's lunch did; but Andrew brought him to Jesus. Do you know what tradition tells us, that one of these Greeks, who he was? He was Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Andrew brought him to Jesus.

Do you know, you never know what you're doing when you bring somebody to Jesus? When it's a family member, like he brought his brother to Jesus, and where it's just a little boy, or whether it's a stranger that you've never met. Do you know what I want to ask you to do this Christmas season to make this a right Christmas? I don't want you to make the promise out loud, but I'd like you to make it to yourself, and I'm going to make it to myself. I want you to bring somebody to Jesus before Christmas. I want you to say, O God, this will be my Christmas gift to you. I am going to bring somebody to you. I am going to win a soul to Christ, and my Christmas present to you, Lord Jesus, will be somebody that I've brought to you. Now, maybe we can't all do that, but, you know, I think it ought to be in our heart to do it. I wonder sometime, Brother Bob, if I've lost the soul-winner's zeal. I still win souls, and I thank God that I do, but I can remember as a college boy, I would be so burdened for souls, I would get on my knees and cry and weep, and say, God, I will not eat, and I will not sleep, until I've won a soul to you. And then, I would go out and walk the streets of that college town, up and down the streets, stopping people, trying to find somebody that I could lead to Jesus. If it wouldn't be this person, I'd witness and go to the other person. What we have to do is to keep that fire burning in our hearts, and we need to say, Lord, help me not to get so

wrapped up in all of the parties and all of the festivities, and all of the things that come with this, that we forget what it is all about, and we have a self-centered Christmas. And I want you to beware of a superficial Christmas, and I want you to beware of a self-centered Christmas.

Now, let me say this to you. Just as we have this little devotional guide that will help you beware of a superficial Christmas, we also have a wonderful opportunity to keep you from being and having a self-centered Christmas. It's called the Singing Christmas Tree. We have taught you that one of the best forms of evangelism is to make friends for the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know a better way in this context, where we are, in this city, in this church, at this time, to win people to Jesus than to take some of those Singing Christmas Tree tickets that you have, invite somebody, and share your testimony with them, and if you possibly can, urge them to give their hearts to Jesus Christ, and if you cannot win them to Christ, at least get them in the context where the Gospel will be presented. And you can be certain that at the close I will present the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will, and you will have soaked them in prayer, and you will have given your testimony to them, and they will be with you, and they will be loved, and they will be in a warm and friendly context. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing for you to do? I mean, we've not just come and put up this colossal tree and all of this set and all of this money and all of this work just to entertain ourselves. It is not entertainment. It is evangelism, bringing souls to Jesus.

Thank God—thank God—for the Andrews of this world. We don't have anything written that Andrew wrote, but Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke. We don't have any sermons that he preached, but Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, and wrote 1 and 2 Peter. We, dear friends, need to understand that when we bring somebody to Jesus, you may bring the next Billy Graham to Jesus. You may bring, who knows who you're going to bring to Jesus when you bring that person to Jesus. But if they never amount to anything, friend, they will amount to something when they get to heaven and are made in the likeness of Jesus. Must I go and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so? Without one soul with which to greet Him, must I empty-handed go? And I want to ask you to promise to yourself, God helping you, that you will endeavor—at least endeavor, at least endeavor—to bring one soul to Jesus Christ before Christmas.

III. Beware of a Shortsighted Christmas

Beware of a superficial Christmas. Beware of a self-centered Christmas. And, last of all, beware of a shortsighted Christmas. Now, these Greeks came to Jesus, they wanted to know what all of this ritual was about, what the Passover was about, what He was doing. I mean, Jesus was a notorious person in this time, and so, verse 22: "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew and again Andrew and Philip telleth Jesus."

Now, watch what Jesus says: “And Jesus answered them saying”—now, if He answered them, that means they asked Him a question; they asked Him what is all of this about, obviously—“Jesus answered them saying the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily I say unto you, except the corn of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Now, what the Lord Jesus Christ is talking about here is His coming death, burial, and resurrection, because, friend, that is what the religious ceremony Passover was all about. And Jesus is saying, look past this on to what it typifies and what it pictures.

And may I say this to us right now. It’s very easy to get sentimental about a baby, to get sentimental about the birth of Jesus Christ. But God’s plan centers in the cross and not in the cradle. There is no record that I can find that the early church ever celebrated the birth of Jesus.

Now, they mentioned His birth and I’m not opposed to celebrating the birth of Jesus, and to say that since it’s not mentioned—they didn’t do it—is an awfully weak argument. That’s not the point. But I will tell you this much: that folks, it’s very clever of the devil to celebrate an emphasis upon the birth of Jesus that neglects the death of Jesus, and the cradle and the cross must be forever linked.

You see, the more carnal a Christian is—I’ve observed this—and the more carnal a church is, the more they will make of Christmas and the less they will make of Calvary. Did you know that? And when these people came in the midst of all of this ceremony, wanting to know what it was all about, what did Jesus do? Jesus talked to them about His death, burial, and resurrection. Except a grain of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit. That’s what was on Jesus’ heart at that time.

Again, it’s easy to be sentimental about a baby, and we mix up Santa and sentimentality with the baby Jesus. Did you know that Santa and Satan are spelled with the same letters, just changed just a little bit? Now, Jesus said the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified, not some potbellied red-faced old man in a beard. The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Now, I’m not against playing a game about Santa, if you want to play a game with your children, but you let them know it’s a game you play. Don’t you dare tell your children, Oh, yes, darling, Santa Claus is real, all of this. If you lie to them about Santa, how do they know you’re not lying to them about Jesus? Don’t tell that lie. Yeah, amen. Besides that, if I spend all that money on those presents, I don’t want some fat old guy getting the credit for it.

They will enjoy just as much. But you understand that Christmas is about Jesus, and the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified, and so, this Passover was what? It was about a little lamb that was to die. What is Christmas about? Mary had a

little lamb, and that little lamb was born to die. Don't have a shortsighted Christmas. Don't fail to look beyond the cradle to the cross and the crown. And thank Him this Christmas when you see the red that we so often wear at Christmas. Red will remind you of that crimson red that Joyce sang about this morning in that beautiful, beautiful song.

Now, let me just conclude this message tonight by seeing how Jesus concluded it. He says in verses 25 and 26: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." Two things that you need to do this Christmas to make it a right Christmas: glorify Jesus and follow Him. Glorify Jesus—the hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. If any man will come after me, let Him follow me.

Conclusion

You know, sometimes, it's hard to look at an individual and know whether they're saved or whether they're not saved. And sometimes if there's a group of people standing around, and there's a dog in the midst, it'd be hard to tell which man that dog belongs to. Let's say there are two men talking, and they're having a conversation, and the dog is sitting on the floor. And then, the two men part, and then, you're going to find out who the dog belongs to, because the dog will follow his master, is that not right? Well, friend, I made up my mind that if a dog can follow his master, I'm going to follow mine. And you know how you're going to be known? As my little granddaughter Renae here—Renae, you know how you're going to be known in high school? Some kids are going to go this way, and Jesus is going to go that way, and you're going to go that way, because Jesus is your master. In business, some men are going to go this way, and Jesus is going to go that way, Mr. Businessman, and you'll go that way. Joyce and I got married many years ago, and on the first night of our honeymoon, we got on our knees together, and gave our heart and all that we had and all that we would ever hope to be to follow Jesus. I want to ask you this Christmas to make it your purpose to do what Jesus said to these Greeks so long ago. Follow me.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I wonder tonight, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many in this building can say, Pastor Rogers, I have been saved by the grace of God, I know that I'm saved, and I have the sweet assurance if I were to die tonight I would go to heaven, not because of anything that I have done, but because of what Jesus did for me, and my faith in His finished work at Calvary? I know I've been saved, and the Holy Spirit of God bears witness with my spirit that I've been saved, and, Pastor, I have a changed life to back up my testimony. I'm not saved by the way I live, but the way I live is a testimony to the fact

that I am saved. And I have made a public profession of my faith in Jesus, and I have followed Jesus in believers baptism and I'm living for Jesus in the fellowship of a New Testament church. Listen to this: I know that I'm saved, I'm trusting the finished work of Christ, the Holy Spirit bears witness in my heart that I'm saved, I have a changed life that gives testimony to the fact that I'm saved, I've confessed my faith in Christ, I've followed Jesus in believers baptism, and I am now living for Him in the fellowship of a New Testament church. Now, it's faith in Christ that saves you, but these other things are indications that indeed you have really and truly put your faith in Christ, because that indicates that you're following Christ. Now, if these things are true of you, and you can say, Yes, Pastor Rogers, I've given my heart to Jesus, and I have this testimony to back it up, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, and no one else looking around, why don't you just slip up your hand, and thank God that that is true. All right now, take it down.

Now, if you could not lift your hand, and you want to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you are saved, you want God's Spirit to bear witness with your spirit, and you want that changed life, and you know that that you don't have it now, I want to pray for you right now. Father, I pray that should there be some like that in this place tonight, that tonight they would say an everlasting yes to Jesus, and, Lord, repent of their sins, and follow Jesus in faith and obedience. And, if there are some here tonight who have really and truly trusted you, Lord Jesus, but have denied you the glory and have denied the church the joy and denied themselves the peace and the fruitfulness of obedience by not making it public, Lord, help them tonight to openly and publicly confess their faith in you. There are some, dear Lord, who have done that, but have not followed you in believers baptism. Help them to come tonight and present themselves as a candidate for baptism, and to make an appointment for their baptism. Lord, if there are some that ought to be a part of this fellowship, and place their membership here, I pray, Lord, that you would guide them to do just that, and, Lord, that your sweet will will be done in this invitation. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Now, we're going to close the invitation tonight with a Gospel invitation, and we're going to have a minister of the Gospel standing at the head of each of these aisles. And, tonight, if you would say, Lord Jesus, once and for all, I trust you to save me, I have decided to follow you, I give you my heart, I receive you as my Lord and master, I want you to leave your seat and come forward, and tell the minister, just say this, I'm trusting Jesus, or I need to be saved. Put it in your own words; he'll know why you've come. Others may want to come and say, I want to place my membership here. Now, we're talking to those who are saved, now; you don't place your membership in a church without being first saved. So, if you need to be saved, you come and say, I need to be saved. Don't say, I need to place my membership here. But if you're saved, and you

know it, you need a church home, I want you to come and say, I want to place my membership here. Thirdly, if you're a member of this church, or some other church, but you've never had real believers baptism, maybe you were baptized before you were saved, or you've never been baptized by immersion as the Bible teaches, you want to come and say I want to make an appointment for my baptism, and I want to be baptized as a believer in Christ. Or maybe God has laid some other decision on your heart. I'm going to ask you to step out. Some, maybe you just need somebody to pray with you. We'll kneel and pray with you right here. Let's stand together as we sing.

Good News for Troubled Times

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 1, 1992

Main Scripture Text: John 13

“When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”

JOHN 13:21

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Is Never Surprised
- II. God Is Always in Control
- III. God’s Sovereignty Never Cancels Man’s Responsibility
- IV. God’s Authority Is Never Canceled by Man’s Sin
- V. God’s Love Is Undiminished, No Matter What Happens
- VI. God’s Justice Is Forever Sure

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn, if you will, to John chapter thirteen. We’re on the eve of a national election. Many people are distraught, and many people are wondering what will happen. Will their candidate win? Will their ideas prevail? Well I want to give you some good news for troubled times. That’s what we’re going to be thinking about, in John chapter thirteen. And all of John chapter thirteen is couched in what we would call “bad news,” but I don’t want to seem frivolous when I say that chapter fourteen follows chapter thirteen, and chapter fourteen begins with these words, “let not your heart be troubled.” So, I want us to see some good news for troubled times—John chapter thirteen.

Almost 2,000 years ago, there was a mother who gave birth to a bouncing baby boy. She held him on her knees. She hugged him to her bosom. She lavished her love and her kisses upon him. And she chose for this boy one of the most honored names in Hebrew history. She named him Judas. What a joy was hers as she held in her hand little baby Judas. It was an honored name in that day. Don’t you know, I’ve lived a long time, and I’ve never known a boy named Judas. I’ve known boys with Bible names; I’ve known Peter, Paul, Andrew, James, John, Matthew, but I’ve never met a Judas. Have you? Not anybody named Judas. I’ve heard of dogs named Judas, goats named Judas,

but never a boy named Judas. Judas, you see, was the ultimate tragedy. And, while his mother rejoiced at his birth, do you know what Jesus said? Jesus said, it would have been better for him that he had never been born. And Judas' name is the tragic story of lost opportunity. And in every list of the apostles, the disciples, his name is last. And how tragic, because, above all things, that's what he wanted: to be first. And rather than being first, he was last. That's how Satan deceived him and how much like Satan he was, because Satan wanted to be above all, and Satan will end up below all and beneath all.

Now, what was Judas' problem? Well Judas' problem was that he wanted the kingdom without the king. Judas' problem was he wanted what Jesus could give, but he did not want who Jesus was. And Judas sold the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. I'm always amazed at that. You would think, well, maybe if he sold Jesus for millions of dollars, maybe if he sold Jesus for some great, grand privilege—but just for thirty pieces of silver? And yet, I am not amazed, because I've been preaching long enough to know that there are still people today who will sell Jesus out very cheaply. I believe that there are people who would give up going to church before they would give up getting a new refrigerator. I believe that there are people who will not come forward in this service tonight and give their heart to Jesus Christ, because they're afraid if they do, they might be committed to Bible stewardship; they might be asked to give to the work of Christ. And so, like Judas of old, they will sell Jesus out.

For, the 13th chapter of the gospel of John—it tells how Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus—is not important because of what it says about Judas. This 13th chapter is important because of what it says about Jesus. And I want you to look, and we're going to find six wonderful principles about Jesus that will carry our hearts through in troubled times. And we'll end up chapter thirteen, looking in chapter fourteen, that says, let not your heart be troubled, because the treachery and the failure and the sin and the debauchery and the duplicity of Judas is but the black velvet on which the radiant diamond of Jesus' character is set forth. And so you see the contrast here in this thirteenth chapter between Judas and Jesus. Jesus, the perfect one; Judas, the perverse one. Jesus, the holy one; Judas, the hellish one. Jesus, the pure one; Judas, the polluted one.

And I want you to learn now, on the eve of this election, six things that have really blessed my heart as I have looked at this passage and helped me in a time of trouble. And this is a time of trouble. I don't know who is going to be elected. I know whom I want to be elected, but I don't know who is going to be elected for the President of the United States. But I'm going to tell you something: God already knows—God already knows.

I. God Is Never Surprised

So here's the first point, first principle: God is never surprised—God is never surprised. Now, look in chapter thirteen, verse three: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he was come from God and went to God; He riseth from supper and laid aside his garments and took a towel and girded Himself.” Now the point that I want to make in verse thirteen is the knowledge that the Lord Jesus had then, and does have. And then, look in verse eighteen. Jesus said somebody's going to betray me. And then, He says, “I speak not of you all: for I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Now, Jesus here says, I am going to be betrayed, but I know that I am going to be betrayed. And I'm going to be betrayed that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Now, the betrayal of Judas did not take Jesus by surprise. The principle is that God is never surprised.

Go back to John chapter six, and look, if you will, in verse sixty-four. And this is a blessing to me because, somehow, sometimes, we think that things take God by surprise. But, in John chapter six, and in verse sixty-four, we read these words concerning Judas—Jesus said, “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray him.” Some people get the idea that Judas was saved, and then lost his salvation. He was never saved. Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas was not a believer. He never was a believer. He never had trusted Christ. Don't ever use Judas as an illustration of somebody that lost their salvation. He never had his salvation. And Jesus knew from the very beginning that Judas did not trust Him, did not believe in Him. As a matter of fact, if you'll look on down, John chapter six and verse seventy, Jesus answered them, “Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?” He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

Now, folks, what happened, and when Judas did what he did, it surprised all of the other apostles, but it didn't surprise Jesus. Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God? I mean, He knows the beginning and the end. God knows the future. Now go back to chapter thirteen and look in verse nineteen. Here's the key. Jesus said, “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, you may believe that I am He.” Now, in my King James Version of the Scripture, the word He is italicized, because it is not a part of the original; it is supplied by the translator. And what Jesus literally says is, “Now, I tell you before it comes, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am.” And when He said, that you might believe that I am, He is now equating Himself with the Almighty. It is the most sacred name of Jehovah. That is not a god that will be, or a god that was, but Jehovah is the great I am that I am, and He is the God, the Father of eternity. He knows the beginning from the end. It is an incredible thought

that God knows already who will be elected; He already knows that. Now, we're going to stay up late Tuesday night and watch, shout, cry, weep, do whatever we do; but God already knows what God has already done. It's interesting, isn't it? He already knows. He knows. Jesus knew ahead of time who would betray Him; He knew even when He chose Judas. That the Scripture might be fulfilled—it was written in God's Holy Word.

II. God Is Always in Control

Second thing to help you in troubled times. Not only is God never surprised, but God is always in control. God—that's right, that was a good place for an amen. Only one person had enough sense to say it. All right now, listen. God is always in control. Now, look in verse three: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand,"—it looked like He wasn't in control. They were about to take Him and bind Him and carry Him away and crucify Him, but He's in complete control. He's not the victim here. Look, if you will, in verse thirteen: "Ye call me master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." Friend, He was Lord of the situation there that day. Well, you say, poor Jesus, they came in, and Judas betrayed Him, and He was certainly surprised; and now it looks like everything is out of control, and all of God's plans are going awry. Oh, no, look again, if you will, in verse eighteen: "I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, you may believe that I am the great I am." You see, Jesus is never surprised, and He is never out of control. And where God does not rule—listen, listen—where God does not rule, He overrules. Judas meant it for evil; but God used it for good.

Very much like the life of Joseph when Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers. And Joseph was carried away to the land of Egypt, and there, Joseph became a type and a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the salvation of his brothers who sold him into slavery. And Joseph said, in Genesis chapter fifty, verse twenty, to those evil brothers: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Now let me give you a great, great verse. Isaiah forty-six, verse ten—it speaks of God. Now listen to it—listen: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My council shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God says, my counsel, my law, my Word, my will, my prophecy—I have declared the end from the beginning, and it will stand, and I will do all my pleasure. God's in perfect control, no matter who gets elected. Daniel chapter four, verse thirty-five—listen to this one: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" Nobody can stop what God does—

nobody. God is in control.

Now let me give you another one—Ephesians chapter one, verse eleven. The Bible speaks of Almighty God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it says, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”—not just your salvation. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. If George Bush is elected, it’s because God has allowed it. If Bill Clinton is elected, it is because God has done after the counsel of His own will. Now, man proposes, but God disposes. And the Bible says that God has a plan. Even when Judas betrayed Jesus and sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, all that was, was a fulfillment of Zechariah eleven, verses twelve and thirteen: “And I said unto them, If you think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.”

You see, Judas is a type of the Antichrist, and it’s very easy to see he’s called, as the Antichrist is called a son of perdition, and our world is ripe for Antichrist. There’s a beast lurking in the shadows. Many of us believe that Antichrist is alive, or at least may be alive, ready to be revealed. Now, that doesn’t mean that things have gotten out of control. Antichrist has a number, it’s 666; but I want to tell you, 777 is still in control. You need to understand that. The Lord Jesus here, as He’s facing Judas, He said look, I’m telling you ahead of time, this doesn’t take me by surprise. My dear friend, I have told you before: the Holy Trinity never meets in emergency session—never. Cory Ten Boom said to me on one occasion, “there’s no panic in heaven, only plans.” Let me tell you what I believe the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived said. It reminds me of a preacher who asked his wife one morning at breakfast, “How many great preachers do really think there are in the world?” She said, “I don’t know, but probably one less than you think there is.” Here’s what Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: “There is no attribute more comforting to his children than that of God’s sovereignty.” Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought to more earnestly contend than the doctrine of their master over all creation, the kingship of God over all the works of His own hand, the throne of God, and His right to sit upon that throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great stupendous, yet certain, doctrine of the sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere, except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop, to fashion the worlds, and to make stars. They will allow Him to be in His gift house, to dispense His gifts, and to bestow His bounties. They will allow

Him to sustain the earth, and to bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving oceans; but, when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth. And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter. Then it is that we are execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us. For God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne that we trust. And I say, praise God!

Now I read this scripture tonight before I stepped out here. I just turned and read it from Habakkuk to myself. And I want you to listen to what Habakkuk said when he faced troubled times. In Habakkuk chapter three verse seventeen, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall the fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk on mine high places.” My dear friend, that’s the Word of God. God is never surprised; God is always in control.

III. God’s Sovereignty Never Cancels Man’s Responsibility

Now go back again to John chapter thirteen, and here’s the third principle I want you to see. And it is this: God’s sovereignty never cancels man’s responsibility. Have you got it? God is in control, but God’s sovereignty never cancels man’s responsibility. Now the Bible speaks of what Judas did in verse eighteen: “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” It was prophesied ahead of time what Judas would do, and yet, my dear friend, listen to me and listen carefully—Judas’ actions were not apart from his own will and desire. Judas was not a robot, and Judas was not an unwilling victim. God’s grace had been offered to Judas, and Jesus endeavored to bring Judas to repentance with love, and with pleas, and with rebuke. And if you’ll find out here that Jesus showed love to Judas. In verse five, we find out that Jesus washed Judas’ feet along with washing Peter and Andrew and James and John’s feet—He washed Judas’ feet. In verse eleven, Jesus gave them all, and gave Judas, a warning. In verse twenty-six, Jesus gave to Judas the ultimate act of hospitality. We read here, and Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I have given sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.” Now what does that mean? My dear friend, this was a custom to give to a person as an act of hospitality and honor. All of these were ways of saying, Judas, I love you. Now, my dear friend, listen. God is sovereign, but Judas was responsible. Listen carefully. If God was responsible,

and if Judas could not choose, then Judas was not responsible, and Judas should be pitied and not judged. But Judas became the traitor of the Lord Jesus Christ by his own choice. And all the sovereign God did was to design Judas' treachery into the divine plan. You see, my dear friend, listen. God's sovereignty never, ever diminishes man's responsibilities. And I'm afraid there are some very wicked things going on in America today, and those wicked things will cause men to come into an account before a righteous and a holy God.

IV. God's Authority Is Never Canceled by Man's Sin

Now here's the fourth thing I want you to see. The fourth thing I want you to see is this: that God's authority is never canceled by man's sin. Look in verse twenty—Jesus speaks to His disciples and He says this: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me. And He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. Now He was talking to His disciples, and He was saying, look, I'm still in control, and because I'm in control my authority has not been canceled by what Judas has done. Now, when the disciples had heard that Judas was going to betray the Lord Jesus, or that someone would betray Him, perhaps they were filled with self-doubt. Maybe they were wondering about their own credentials. I mean, after all, there was scandal in the ministry, now. Was their ministry over? What Jesus is saying in verse twenty is, whatever Judas does, does not alter your commission or negate your call. And no Judas or no politician can destroy the high calling of the church. Now, keep that in your heart and in your mind. In the midst of troubled times, the Lord Jesus said, “I'm sending you forth, and you are going to be received in my name. I send you, that He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me. And He that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me. Behind me is the authority of the Father in Heaven”—that's what the Lord Jesus Christ is saying. When you preach, you're representing me; you're acting on my behalf. Now, we're living in a day where I'm seeing preachers, pastors, who are committing moral failure and infidelity. We're seeing hypocrites; we're seeing character imploding, and things caving in; there's satanic opposition. I hang my head in shame when I hear of some Judas who has betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes he bears the title evangelist, or pastor, or whatever. But, my dear friend, I hear the voice of Jesus saying to me, Adrian, I have called you; I have commissioned you. You are mine. And don't use some hypocrite as an excuse for not following me. Yes, there are hypocrites. There always have been. There are shyster lawyers, quack doctors, counterfeit money, charlatan preachers, but I will, and you will, and this church will, keep preaching the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes. I thank God that there were eleven disciples who did not fail and did not quit—nor will I. No matter what happens, by what some man and a group of men may do.

V. God's Love Is Undiminished, No Matter What Happens

Next, number five, God's love is undiminished, no matter what happens. Look, if you will, in verses twenty-one and following: "And when Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake." Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of the disciples whom Jesus loved—that's John's way of talking about himself. John's so self-effacing, he didn't even call his name, but it was John himself. Simon Peter therefore beckoned unto Him that He should ask who it should be of whom He spake. He then, lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord who is it? Jesus answered, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." Then look over at verse thirty-four: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you're my disciples, if you have love one for another."

The Bible says Jesus was troubled. Why was Jesus troubled? Was Jesus troubled? Do you think Jesus was troubled? Because He says, uh-oh, now I'm going to be betrayed, now I'm going to the cross? Jesus came to die. Not that He relished or embraced the cross, the cross was a hellish terrible thing; but Jesus was troubled and brokenhearted because He knew what was happening to Judas. He knew the destiny that Judas was facing. He was brokenhearted to see a man so dominated by the power of evil. Jesus had spent three-and-a-half years showing Judas love. He treated Judas with such kindness and such love, knowing that he was lost, knowing that one day he would betray Him, that, when Jesus said, one of you shall betray me, none of the disciples said, I know who it is—it's that man that Jesus has been giving the cold shoulder to; it's that man that Jesus refuses to fellowship with; it's that man that Jesus refuses to love. No! Jesus had loved this man, and now Jesus' heart is broken over this man. Not a one of the disciples ever suspected that it was Judas. They said, contrary, is it I? And Jesus does something, as I've already told you, it was the ultimate act of love, to give Judas a morsel of food. For the host to do this would be a mark of honor to a special guest. This final act of love should have broken Judas' heart, but Judas made the final decision, and Satan entered into him. But remember, Satan could not have entered into Judas until Judas opened the door, and Jesus' heart was broken. A man will go to hell unsaved, but he will never go to hell unloved.

My dear friend, I don't care what the people of this world do, what choices they make, God loves every one of them, and so must we.

VI. God's Justice Is Forever Sure

Last thing I want to say is this: that God's justice is forever sure. Look, if you will, in verse thirty of this same chapter—John chapter thirteen and verse thirty: “Then He, having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night.” Now, why do you think John added, and it was night? It's a poetic way of emphasizing something. Of course it was night, but what John was saying is, Judas had crossed the deadline. He's damned to hell forever. And now, Jesus is no longer reaching out to him, because there's no need. He has committed the unpardonable sin. And now, mercy turns to judgment. And Judas was determined to betray Christ, and Christ was determined to die for sinners. Judas went out and hanged himself. He stepped from the hell within him to the hell before him. And Jesus said, in Matthew chapter twenty-six, verse twenty four, “The son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man that he had not been born.” Indeed, for the man who is not born twice, he'll die twice. And if he's not born twice, the day will come when he will wish that he had never been born at all.

Conclusion

I don't know what all that means to you, but I tell you it means a lot to me—it means a lot to me. It means that in spite of the machinations of the wicked and evil men, there is a God who is working out His plan. That God is never surprised; He is always in control. And while He allows man to choose, man is responsible for his choice. God continues to love men even when they do wickedly; but God will judge this world. All of that tells me: Adrian, no matter what you're going to be feeling next Tuesday night about ten o'clock, God has commissioned you to preach the gospel, and you do it as long as you have breath in your body. That's what I'm going to do; that's what we're going to do.

My dear friend, God is on His throne, and don't you forget it. Let's pray. Father, I thank you that we serve a mighty God. I thank you, Lord, that you already know how the election is going to come out. And yet, Lord, man can still choose. We don't understand that, but Lord, after this sermon, someone will come and ask me to explain it to them, and I won't be able to. But I know, dear God, that you've given us a choice to make, but Lord, no matter what we choose, you're a sovereign God, that you rule in the heavens, and your counsel will be done. And we thank you, dear God, that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're not a Christian, if you've never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I want to help you to do so right now. If you're listening by radio, maybe you're driving in your automobile, if you would like to receive Christ and become a child of God, if you'd like to know that your sin is forgiven, if you would like to have a new nature, if you'd like to be born from

above, born again, if you'd like to have peace and power and hope and a future, if you'd like to know that when you die—not if you die, but when you die—you'll go to heaven—the only if is if Jesus comes back first—you want to know that for certain, may I remind you that salvation is a gift. It was purchased with the blood of Jesus and Christ, atoned for your sin on the cross. He paid your sin's debt. Only, that doesn't do you any good, it only increases your judgment, unless you're willing to repent of your sin and receive Christ as your Lord and Savior. The Bible says it simply, plainly, clearly, sublimely: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And that word believe does not mean mere intellectual belief; it means trust.

Timeless Truth for Troubled Times

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 26, 1990

Main Scripture Text: John 13

“Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.”

JOHN 13:19

Outline

Introduction

I. The Omniscience of Jesus

II. The Sovereignty of Jesus

III. The Grace of Jesus

IV. The Authority of Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

There's an old story that is rooted in truth of a great, great theologian, who was being interviewed by a young preacher. And, he said to this great theologian—who'd poured through all the musty libraries, had studied, and given it all of his life to the exacting study of theology—he said, “Sir, would you give me, if you could, in a sentence, out of all of your study and your lifetime of experience, the greatest one truth, the most vital, most wonderful, quintessence of truth that you can give?” And, that old theologian said to that young man, “Sir, I can give it to you simply. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Can't get beyond that, can you?

Take God's Word and turn to John chapter 13. We're going to be talking today about *Timeless Truth for Troubled Times*. Now, trouble comes to all of us. My dear friend, we're facing a troubled world, a world in turmoil, and a world on the brink of war. You say, “Well, this is a problem that we may very well get over.” You're right. But, this is a problem that may see us, this time next week, in a full-fledged, global war, this time next week. These are troubled times, troubled times. Times to look into the entire chapter.

But, I want to pick out of this chapter, primarily, the treachery of a man named Judas. You know, there was a time when a mother held to her cheek a bouncing baby boy, and she called him Judas, a very wonderful named based on the Old Testament

name Judah. She called him Judas. How proud she must have been of this little baby boy. But you know, today, I've never known a boy who was named Judas, by his mother, have you?

I've known of boys named Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, Andrew, James, and even a few named Bartholomew. But, I have never met a boy named Judas. I've heard of a goat named Judas, and a dog named Judas, but never a boy named Judas. How grateful this mother must have been for this little boy named Judas. And yet, Judas, in the Bible, is the ultimate tragedy. And, he's the story of lost opportunity. It was Judas who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted to be first, and yet, in all of the lists of the disciples, he is always last. He wanted a place for himself. But, the Bible says, he went "*to his own place*" that is, in Hell (Acts 1:25).

Not a darker, deeper, sadder story than the story of Judas that we find here in the 13th chapter of the Gospel of John. But, it is not Judas that I want us to see today. It is Jesus. And, what I want to do is to use the story of Judas and the denial and betrayal of Judas. I want us to use that as the black velvet upon which we want to display the radiant and glorious, beautiful diamond of the character of the Lord Jesus. As you see Jesus as He reacts to Judas, who would betray Him, you're going to learn some timeless truths about Jesus.

And, these wonderful truths are going to keep you today in the trouble that you're in. If you will, in time of trouble look at the Lord Jesus. You will see how Jesus reacted in times of trouble and you will see the character of Jesus in time of trouble. You will see what Jesus was like, and indeed who Jesus is today, because He is our everlasting compatriot. He is here with us today. If you will see that and learn that, I can tell you, my dear friend, it will carry you through some dark days and some troubled days.

And so, ours is a dark day. But, after the 13th chapter of John, Jesus begins the 14th chapter of John. And, he says, "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me*" (John 14:1). I mean, after all of this, here are some timeless truths for troubled times. And, the Lord Jesus is saying to me today, and saying to you today, let not your heart be troubled. And, the reason our heart will not be troubled is all wrapped up in the character of this one called the Lord Jesus.

Now, there are a number of things I thought about as I studied this chapter, and I want to share them with you, things about Jesus that I've learned.

I. The Omniscience of Jesus

First of all, he is omniscient, he is omniscient. Now, that's a big double-jointed word. But, let me just break it down. He knows everything. He knows everything. Look, if you will here, in John chapter 13 notice verse 1: "*Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come*" (John 13:1). Look if you will to John chapter

13 and verse 18, Jesus says here, *“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen”* (John 13:18). Just underscore the words I know whom I have chosen. *“But that the scripture may be fulfilled.”* And, then while you’re there, just put in your margin, John chapter 6 and verse 64: *“For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him”* (John 6:64). And, then in John chapter 6 verses 70–71: *“Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* Now, all through these Scriptures that I’ve read to you, Jesus said, “I know everything that’s gonna take place. I know that the hour of my departure is at hand. I know that Judas is going to betray me. I know whom I have chosen. And, I know ahead of time that one of the ones that I have chosen is a devil.”

Now, my dear friend, put it down big, and put down plain, and put it down straight, Jesus was not surprised by what Judas did. And, He’s not surprised by the trouble that you’re having today. He is never surprised. Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever “occurs” to God? He’s not surprised. Listen, he says, “have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? *“He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve”* (John 6:70–71).

He’s not surprised by what is happening today in the Middle East. Look in John 13 verse 19, the key verse in this chapter, *“Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he”* (John 13:19). Now, Jesus said, “I’m gonna tell you what’s going to happen before it ever happens, that you may believe that I am he.” If you’re studying the King James, like I’m preaching from today, look at verse 19 very carefully. The word “he” is in italics. That means it is not in the original. It has been supplied by the translators to make it read more smoothly. But, here it doesn’t help, as a matter of fact, here it detracts.

Literally, what Jesus said is this, “Judas is going to betray me. I know that Judas is gonna betray me. And, I’m going to tell you before it ever happens that you may know that I am.” It doesn’t say, “That, I am he.” Just simply “That, I Am.” Well, you say, “What’s so great about that?” Well, “I Am” is the greatest name for Jehovah God that is used in the Old Testament. Jehovah God revealed Himself to Moses as “the great I Am.” And, Jesus is saying, listen, I am Jehovah. And, I’m going to tell you what is going to happen before it ever happens, that you may know that I Am.

In this entire chapter, I want you to see that Jesus knew before He ever chose Judas that Judas was a devil, that Judas was a crook. Jesus knew before Judas ever betrayed Him that Judas would betray Him. Jesus knew before he was ever crucified that he would be crucified. You see, He has this incredible, incredible knowledge. The very first thing, the very wonderful truth that I have for tough times is that Jesus knows about these tough times before they ever get here. Nothing takes Him by surprise, okay? Put that in your heart and in your mind.

Nothing surprises our Lord. Nothing. He knows ahead of time. He knows the beginning from the end. He was here before your trouble ever got here. He'll be here after your trouble is gone. He knows—put it down—it will comfort you. We see His omniscience.

II. The Sovereignty of Jesus

The second thing I want you to see is his sovereignty. Not only does He know, but also He is in complete control. In this wonderful chapter, look, if you will, in John 13 verse 13: *“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.”* Jesus is saying, “In the midst of this thing, they’re going to nail Me up on a cross. But I am master, and I am Lord.” look again in John 13 verse 18: *“Speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me”* (John 13:18). Do you see that? Jesus said, “I know exactly what I’m doing. And, I did it on purpose. I didn’t that the Bible would be fulfilled.”

Now, in the Old Testament, it was prophesied in Psalm 41 that Judas would betray the Lord Jesus Christ. And, the Scripture says, in Psalm 41 verse 9 it gives this verse, *“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me”* (Psalm 41:9). What does it mean to lift up the heel? That’s kind of a strange expression. But, what it literally means is that when somebody is on the ground and has been vanquished in Bible times, as an act of victory, they would take their heavy heel and put it in the windpipe of their victim. That’s what Jesus says, “Judas is about to do to Me. My friend, in whom I’ve trusted has lifted up his heel against Me. He has put My throat under his heel.” The ultimate act. But Jesus said, “I know whom I’ve chosen. I chose the one who would do that.” You see, Jesus knew that His own bruising would be our blessing. Nothing is out of control.

Now, friend, sometimes today, you may think that God didn’t know what’s going on. I wan to tell you He does. And, you may think sometimes that the Lord Jesus is losing the battle because it looks like people today who are lifting up their heel against the Lord Jesus. But, put it down again in your heart in tough times, where Jesus does not rule, He overrules. Not only is He omniscient, but also He is sovereign. A few verses for your margin. Isaiah 46 verse 10: *“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isaiah 46:10). That is, “Nothing can stop the hand of God.”

He’s sovereign. Daniel chapter 4 verse 35, listen to it. *“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing...”* That is, God didn’t care about the five billion people of the earth, even if they all come against him. *“And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven.”* There may be people on earth, but there’s an army in Heaven. Listen, *“...and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”* (Daniel 4:35). Don’t get worried about Hollywood, the liquor dealers,

the whiskey barons, the perverts, and the dope pushers don't worry about that. Oh, be concerned. Pray, yes. But, remember that God is sovereign.

Listen, to, Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 11. The Bible says, *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"* (Ephesians 1:11). I don't care what happens. God works all things after the counsel of his own will. Jesus said, "I know whom I've chosen." The Scripture will be fulfilled. God is in perfect control. All right, are keeping score?

III. The Grace of Jesus

First thing we learn about Jesus—he knows everything; he's omniscient. Nothing takes Him by surprise. Secondly, not only does He know, but also He is in full control. Jesus said, "I know exactly what I'm doing. I chose Judas full well knowing that he would betray me." Timeless truths for troubled times. The third thing I want you to learn is the grace of the Lord Jesus is so clearly shown. Look again in verse 18. Jesus said, "I speak not of you all. I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled."

You say, "Pastor, if Jesus chose Judas that the Scripture might be fulfilled, if it was prophesied that Judas would betray Jesus, does that mean that Judas didn't have an opportunity to be saved?" It's a good question. If you are in John, if you'd turn to John chapter 17 and verse 12, you'd find another verse that would cause us to ask this question. Jesus said, *"While I was with them in the world."* Talking about His disciples, *"I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition..."*—That's another name for Judas—*"...but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled"* (John 17:12). There the Bible says that He was lost that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Well, does that mean that Judas did not have a chance to be saved? No. My dear friend, not a person has ever been born without an opportunity to be saved and to know the grace of God. Judas' betrayal of Jesus was not apart from Judas' own will and his own desire. Judas was not a robot. Nor was Judas an unwilling victim. Judas chose the path that he would take. Judas chose to betray the Lord Jesus. And, Jesus offered His grace to Judas, just like He offers His grace to every unsaved person in this place today.

And, if you were to follow this 13th chapter of John, you would see how Jesus is reaching out to Judas. For example, in verse 5, you find Jesus washing the feet of Judas. Did Jesus wash the feet of all of the disciples, Judas included? Indeed, He did. John chapter 13, you find Jesus giving a warning to Judas—*"...ye are clean, but not all"* (John 13:10). That is, "There's sin in your life Judas." In John chapter 13 and verse 26, you'll find that the people are there at a meal and the disciples are there. And, they're at

that Last Supper. The Bible says that Jesus, in verse 26, took, what the King James Version calls a sop, but a morsel of bread, and He offered that to Judas.

Well, you say, "What is the significance of that?" Dear friend, at a feast, for the host to dip in to those crushed herbs and fruit that were there at the Passover, to put that on a piece of matzo bread, and offer to that to someone was the highest mark of honor. Jesus treated Judas, knowing that Judas would betray Him, as the guest of honor. Jesus warned Judas. Jesus washed Judas' feet. Jesus taught Judas. Jesus loved Judas. Judas had the opportunity to be saved.

You see, if God just created Judas to betray the Lord Jesus and forced Judas to betray the Lord Jesus so that the crucifixion might come to place, then Judas is not to be blamed, he would be to be pitied. It would be God who would be to be blamed. No, my dear friend, Judas had an opportunity to be saved. Now, God knew ahead of time that Judas would betray the Lord Jesus Christ. And, so God co-opted the betrayal of Jesus into His eternal plan.

Nothing took Jesus by surprise, but Jesus reached out to Judas in grace. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, that we have a world that is rebelling against our God. And, God knew the world would rebel. But, I'm telling you that anybody who will come to Jesus in repentance and faith can be saved. And, what a warning the life of Judas ought to be to us. How close Judas was to Jesus. And yet, Judas died and went to Hell. Judas was three and a half years with the Son of God in the most wonderful seminary that a man could be in. He was basking in the light. And yet, he was living in the darkness. You remember that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss?

Now, Jesus said, "*I am the door*" (John 10:7). He is the door to what? He's the door to Heaven. Judas kissed the door to Heaven, and went to Hell. That's how close he was to being saved. And yet, he was forever lost. Does this get into your heart? Oh, dear friend, there's so many sitting in this building today. Many of you are lost. You're as lost as you can be. And yet, you're so close to being saved. And, God's grace is reaching out to you. But, in your heart you're not truly, truly saved. Judas heard the truth. He posed as a believer. But, Jesus said, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 7:21).

Do you know Jesus Christ? Suppose we were to ask Judas a question. "Judas, are you saved?" He said, "Well, I'm a church member." "Well, Judas, we didn't ask you that. Have you been born again?" "I'm a charter member." "Judas, I didn't ask you that. Do you know Jesus Christ personally?" "I'm the treasurer." And he was. He was the treasurer of the twelve. But, yet, he never had a second birthday.

And, may I say to you, dear friend, there's a wonderful, wonderful Scripture that I want to share. 2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 5. The Bible says this, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith*" (2 Corinthians 13:5). How do you know you're

saved? You say, “Well, I’m a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. It’s a conservative, Bible-believing church.” So what? You say, “Well, I know the Bible.” So did Judas.

Dear friend, the grace of God is reaching out to you. The grace of God reached out to Judas, and the grace of God is reaching out to you. But, like Judas, you can refuse it.

IV. The Authority of Jesus

Now, here’s some timeless truths for troubled times. In this story, we see the omniscience of our Lord. We see the sovereignty of our Lord. We see the grace of our Lord. There’s a fourth thing I want you to see. And, it is the authority of our Lord. Notice in John 13 verse 20: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me*” (John 13:20). Now, why did Jesus put this verse in here, right in the middle of all of this? Jesus says, “Somebody’s going to betray me.” The disciples really don’t know who it is that is going to betray the Lord Jesus. But, the disciples obviously are very troubled. I mean, it seems like their world is caving apart. Jesus here is facing the cross. Public opinion is turning against the Lord Jesus. And, now on top of it all, there’s scandal. Somebody, one of the twelve, one of that innermost group, is going to betray the Lord Jesus.

But Jesus here gives ’em the commission again, and Jesus tells them again that they’re acting as His ambassadors. Look, verily, verily. The word “verily, verily” means truly, truly, or pay attention, pay attention. I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth him that sent me.

Now, the disciples, as I say, were infected at this time with self-doubt. None of them expected that it was Judas. Some of them wondered, “Could it be me?” They are wondering now about their own credentials. They’re wondering, “Is my ministry over?” And, what Jesus is saying is that “Whatever the betrayer does is not going to alter your call, your commission, or your authority from God.”

You say, “Pastor, how does that help you today in troubled times?” Well, I’ll tell you how it helps me. We’re living in a day of apostasy and we’re living in a day of scandal. We’re living in a day where some erstwhile spiritual leaders, not just in our denomination, but also in every denomination, are betraying the Lord Jesus Christ. And, we’ve had scandal with what some call tele-evangelists. And, we’re saying, “Well, look what happened to that man. And, look what happened to this man. And, look how that person has failed.” And perhaps, sometimes we want to get discouraged. And, we want to quit.

May I tell you, dear friend, that Jesus’ saying, “Someone is going to betray Me.” Did not alter their call or their commission one little bit. “Adrian, what are you going to do, now that some have failed the Lord Jesus? Adrian, what are you going to do in the face of unfaithfulness and sexual scandal? What are you going to do?” I’ll tell you what I’m

gonna to do. I'm gonna keep on preaching Jesus Christ. That's what I 'm gonna do. That is exactly what I'm gonna do. That's what Jesus is saying to these.

Listen, "My authority is still here. I know this man is going to betray Me," Jesus says. But, Jesus also gives them a promise that He gives to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth him that sent Me." Don't you use some hypocrite as an excuse to quit serving God? What a pathetic thing that is going to be at the judgment. The Lord Jesus still has authority in these troubled times.

Now, my dear friend, you put it down. He knows. He knows everything. He is sovereign. He is in control. His grace still reaches out. And, His authority is still there. Don't you use some hypocrite, some Judas, some traitor, some betrayer as an excuse to quit serving the Lord Jesus. People who hide behind hypocrites are pitiful people. You have to be smaller than a hypocrite to hide behind him. And, if you're hiding behind him, he's closer to God than you are because he's between you and the Lord. They've always been hypocrites. Judas was a hypocrite. But, thank God, the other eleven didn't quit.

As I said a while back, we bought some eggs, twelve, and one of them was a hypocrite. Dear friend, some lawyers may be shysters. But, if you need legal advice, you go to a lawyer. Some doctors may be quacks. But, if you get sick, you go to a doctor. Some money may be counterfeit. But, you haven't thrown away all of your money yet because some is, have you? You know better. You know better.

You say, "Well, some Christians are hypocrites. Therefore, I'm not going to church." My dear friend, may I tell you that that makes you a hypocrite because you really know better. The best people on the face of God's green earth are in God's Bible-believing churches. And, you know it. You know it. Yes, there are some hypocrites. There always have been, and there always will be. But, as I study this 13th chapter of John, troubled times, I find some timeless truths. And, one of these is our Lord still has authority. He still has His commission. He still told us to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And rather than fastening on Judas, I'm gonna put my eyes on the other eleven who kept on serving.

The other evening I was with some friends over here a little east of where we live at a lakeside home. And, some friends had invited us over there for supper, about an hour and a half drive from Memphis. I was with some other ministers. We had a delightful meal, and by that time it was dark, out in the country. I did something I'd not done for a long time. I went out to look at the stars, without the glare of the city lights.

It was a clear, clean, and beautiful summer night. And, the stars were up there hanging in the sky like candelabra. And, you could see them twinkle. And, we just stood there. And, I looked and I looked at the Milky Way. And, that incredible canopy of stars.

And, there were about eight of us, just standing out there. Just, just looking. Grown people, just like little children, looking up at the stars. And, then a shooting star went—sh-h-h-h-ot—right across the horizon. Everybody said, “Look. Look. Look. A falling star.” It appeared—sh-h-h-h-ot—and it was gone. And, do you know that one little piece of cinder, streaking through the atmosphere, got more attention than all of those stars up there, that never fell?

Every now and then some, some hypocrite will streak across the atmosphere. And, everybody says, “A falling star.” It’s not even a star at all. It’s just a cinder, out of orbit. Sometimes we get our eyes on these who have disgraced our Lord. Friend, you’d better get your eyes on God’s stars that don’t fall, that don’t fall. And, and don’t just let somebody, something, some Judas, or somebody else take you away in these troubled times from the eternal truths of Almighty God. Now, there is something else that’s shown, and I’m so grateful that it’s shown. Not only is the authority of Jesus shown, but the great, great love of Jesus is shown in this chapter of troubled times.

Notice, if you would, John 13 verse 1. The Bible says that our Lord *“having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end”* (John 13:1). Look, if you will, in John 13 verse 21: *“When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit”* (John 13:21). That is, He’s brokenhearted, *“and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”* Look in John 13 verses 34 and 35: *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13 34:35).

Now, Jesus’ incredible love comes through in this troubled chapter. Jesus loves, and He loves you. Even if you are betraying Him, He loves you. The Bible says that Jesus was troubled concerning Judas. In verse 21, He was troubled in His spirit. Why was He troubled? Because He was brokenhearted. He knew that Judas was going to die and go to Hell. And, Jesus is so grieved. I want to ask you a question. Did Jesus mistreat Judas? No. Did Jesus abuse Judas or neglect him? No. When the disciples’ feet were washed, Jesus washed Judas’ feet.

At the supper, Jesus showed love to Judas by giving him the place of honor. Did you know that Jesus never treated Judas any different than He treated the others, so far as love is concerned? And, when Jesus said, “Somebody’s going to betray me,” the others didn’t say, “Well, it must be Judas. I know the way Jesus has been treating Judas. I know the way Jesus has been, neglecting Judas.” No. Jesus showed the same kind of love to Judas that He showed to John, or Peter. He just loved. He just loved. He loved His enemies. Exactly what He said we’re to do. Listen. Jesus practiced He preached.

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 5 here, and look, if you will, in verse 43: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I*

say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43). That’s exactly what Jesus did. Jesus is showing this incredible love to Judas.

There’s some of you here today who are not saved. There are some of you listening to me on television and you’re not saved. God seems to be so good to you, that you don’t see you need to get saved. What a, what a tragedy. The Bible says, “It is the goodness of God that leads you to repentance.” and in the midst of all of this trouble, and these deep terrible days in which we’re living, his love continues to go forth. There’s nothing that can separate you from the love of God. How Judas despised such wonderful love is beyond me. But, now, the last thing I want you to see about our Lord in troubled times, in this 13th chapter. Not only do you see his love, but also you see his justice.

Look, if you will now, in verse 27 of this same chapter. John chapter 13 and verse 26–27: *“Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”* That is, they said, “Who is going to betray you Jesus?” And, Jesus said to John, “It’s the one to whom I’m gonna give this morsel.” And, Jesus gave this act, this final act of love, to Judas. And, rather than breaking Judas’ heart, it hardened Judas’ heart. And, notice what happened, in verse 27: *“And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly”* (John 13:26–27).

At this point, Judas crossed the deadline. At this point, Judas committed the unpardonable sin. At this point, Satan entered into Judas. And, he crossed the deadline. He is as much in Hell as if the iron doors of Hell had already been shut behind him. And, Jesus, now, having gone to the very bitter end of love, says to Judas, “All right, Judas, the devil is in you now. You are literally possessed of Satan. What you do, do quickly.” And, now mercy and grace and love turn to judgment. Judas is determined to betray Christ, and Jesus is determined to die for the sins of men.

John 13 verse 30 says that Judas *“...went immediately out: and it was night.”* And, indeed it was. It was the midnight of his soul. Now, the Bible goes on to tell—and we don’t have time this morning—how Judas, in remorse, went out and hanged himself. He committed suicide, trying to kill the torment that was in him. But he stepped into the Hell that was before him. He hanged himself. He died pathetically. Remorse, yes. Repentance, no. He crossed the deadline and was judged and lost forever.

Conclusion

You say, “Pastor Rogers, is God gonna let things go on as they do for all eternity? Is right going to be forever on the scaffold and wrong on the throne?” Oh, no, oh no, my friend. The mills of God’s justice grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. Let’s go

back to our day again. The antichrist is waiting in the wings, ready to take over our world. I believe that. I believe the antichrist is alive and well on planet earth today. I believe that. I can't prove it, and I could be wrong. I'm not saying I know it. I'm just saying I believe it.

We see the forces of evil, just as we see in this 13th chapter of John. The Bible says that Satan entered into Judas. Judas is a type and a picture of the antichrist who is gonna be a satanically filled man. Who will again come against Christ as Judas did? But, you listen to me, friend. Our Lord knows. Our Lord is sovereign. Our Lord's grace is still working. Our Lord's commission is still intact. Now listen, six, six, six is just around the corner, but seven, seven, seven is still on the throne. Now, don't forget it. Don't forget it. The incredible thing about this entire 13th chapter of John is that in these dark, terrible, and awful times, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is there. And, I hope you've seen what I've seen, as I looked at this chapter this past week. That the life of Judas is nothing but the black velvet on which the diamond of the character of Jesus Christ shines forth. Let's bow in prayer.

Lessons in Foot Washing

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 19, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 13:1–15

Outline

Introduction

- I. Salvation Is Essential
- II. Security Is Eternal
- III. Sanctification Is Extended to You
- IV. Service Is Expected

Conclusion

Introduction

What a wonderful song. Praise the Lord.

Would you take God's Word and turn to the Gospel of John chapter 13, and I want to talk to you about the matter of foot washing, and what the Bible has to say about foot washing, and how that applies to us in this day and in this age.

Now, foot washing was a common practice in the time of Jesus. Not a religious service, but a very common practice. There were public baths. And going down the street, if your feet were tired and dirty and dusty, you could go in there, and a slave, a servant, would wash your feet. If you had a wealthy home, generally, there would be by the door a basin of water, and, if you were receiving guests into your house, the first thing they would do would be to slip off their sandals and step inside the threshold of your house. And, again, if you had a servant, that servant would be there with a towel and a basin. And you would put your feet in that basin. There'd be a little stool there. And this servant would wash your feet, give them a gentle massage, and dry them with a towel. Your toes would go just like that. Your feet would begin to tingle. It would feel so good. We ought to do that today, to get your feet washed and massaged. Now, the reason they did that, very frankly, is they didn't have sidewalks paved like we have. They didn't have asphalt streets. Everything was dusty and dirty, and the people, for the most part, wore sandals. They didn't have leather shoes like we have to keep out the dust and the dirt. And so, foot washing was a practical thing, but it was also a mark of hospitality. And the passage here in John 13 that I chose, I chose because of the message this morning that has to do with service, and serving the Lord.

Now, let's get the background for this passage of Scripture. We're in John chapter

13. Look in verse 1: “And now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.” Jesus is leaving. He knows He’s leaving. Well, if He’s leaving them now, you would think that He would be doing something with a lot of pomp and circumstance, that maybe they would be having a banquet in His honor, and the master of ceremonies would be up there saying great things about Him because now He is going away. But notice, not only the leaving, but the loving. Notice: “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Now, Jesus, in just a few moments, hours, He’s going to be on His way to Calvary, and He knows it. He knows that the hour has come that He’s going to depart out of the world. That is, He’s going to be crucified, and He is under great pressure and duress and agony, so much that He’s going to sweat, as it were, drops of blood. And He’s washing and loving His disciples, washing their feet, and loving them all the way through.

Do you ever make excuses sometimes when you’re under pressure, and you snap at someone, and bark at someone, and you say, “Well, I’m under so much pressure.” Jesus is loving them, and He’s leaving them, but He is also teaching them. I want you to learn the lesson that He’s about to give in John 13, verse 7. Look at it: “Jesus answered, and said unto them, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Now, that ought to give us a clue that there’s a great lesson here. Jesus is saying, “What I am doing is going beyond washing dirty feet,” for what Jesus had done is this: He got a towel and a basin, positioned Himself there at the door, and as the disciples came in, Jesus, the Lord of glory, washed their feet. The One who created the heavens and the earth is doing slave labor and ignominious labor. He is washing smelly feet.

Now, there are some great lessons here for us to learn tonight, and would to God the man named Adrian will practice what he preaches, and learn what he says, and would to God we can all learn it. Let me give you several lessons concerning foot washing tonight.

I. Salvation Is Essential

First of all, a lesson concerning salvation. Salvation is essential. Now, Jesus here is talking about salvation, and we’re going to see this. Look, if you will now, in verse 8. Jesus has washed the disciples’ feet, and “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered, If I wash thee not...”—now, He doesn’t say your feet; He just simply says, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, if that’s true—now, I’m interjecting the phrase, is that true, but he’s saying to

Him—Lord, if that’s so important, not my feet only, but my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save—or except—to wash his feet, but he is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all.” Now, let’s continue to read. “For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for I, for so I am.” Now, what is all of this? I want you to get the picture.

Suppose we came tonight, we didn’t have automobiles, and we walked to the house of worship. Suppose there was nothing paved, nothing out there but dirt. And let’s suppose we’re all wearing sandals, or perhaps some of us come bare-footed. Now, but suppose before we came to church tonight we had a bath, and we’re all scrubbed and clean, and perfume, soap, and deodorant, and we’re as clean as we could be, but we’re walking to church. Our feet are dirty. And so, our feet need to be washed. And suppose we came here tonight, and ready to have our feet washed, and somebody says, “No, we’re not going to just wash your feet. We’re going to make you take a complete bath.” Well, you wouldn’t need a complete bath. You’ve already had a bath. What you need is your feet washed. Now, what is the lesson here?

Jesus is not talking about physical dirt. Jesus is talking about spiritual defilement, when He’s talking about being clean, and it is very clear and very plain. He is talking about spiritual defilement. When we are saved, we are washed; that is, our bodies are washed. Spiritually, we are washed. Let me give you some verses that speak of our being washed.

For example, in Ephesians 5, verses 25 and 26, the Bible speaks of the “washing of water by the word.” Again, in Titus chapter 3 and verse 5, the Bible speaks of the “washing of regeneration.” And then, again, in the Book of the Revelation chapter 1 and verse 5, the Bible speaks of the Lord, “who washed us from our sins.” That is, the precious blood of Jesus Christ washes and cleanses us. May I ask you this question? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? You know the problem with many, many people who come to church? They’ve been starched and ironed, and never washed, and they’ve never truly been saved. Now, what did Jesus say here? Look at this, in verse 10: “Jesus said...He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet”—that is, he doesn’t have to have another bath, just wash his feet—“but is clean every whit...”—when he gets his feet clean, he’s already clean. He’s already had a bath. And then notice what He says—“but is clean every whit, and ye are clean, but not all.” He literally means, not all of you are clean. “For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.” Is it obvious to you that the Lord here is not talking about physical defilement? He’s talking about sin, and what

He is saying to Simon Peter, “Peter, you’re saved. You’ve already had a bath. I have given you the washing of regeneration, but your feet are dirty. And so, your feet need to be washed. You are saved, but you walk in a dirty world, and, therefore, your feet are defiled, and your feet need to be washed.”

Now, when Jesus said, “You’re clean, but not all of you,” He was talking about Judas. Judas never was saved. Every now and then, we talk about eternal security, and some people say, “Well, you know, what about Judas? Didn’t Judas lose his salvation, one of the twelve?” No, he never had salvation. He was never saved. Look on down, if you will, in verse 18 of this chapter. Jesus said, “I speak not of you all (I know whom I have chosen), but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Jesus said, “You’re clean, but not all of you. There is somebody who is going to betray me. The Scriptures prophesied there’s coming one who is going to lift up his heel against me.”

You’re in John 13. Just go back to John chapter 6, and let’s clear something up. People say, “Did Jesus make a mistake when He called Judas? Was Jesus surprised? Was Jesus just a poor judge of character? Did something go wrong?” No, not at all. Look, if you will, in John chapter 6, verse 64—Jesus said, “But there are some of you—talking to His disciples—that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.” Jesus was not the least bit surprised when Judas betrayed Him. He knew that the Scripture had prophesied this, and it was very clear. Look, if you will again, in verses 70 and 71: “Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon; for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.” The point I’m making, ladies and gentlemen, when Jesus said, “Simon, you’re clean, but not everybody in this room is clean,” because He knew that Judas had never had a spiritual bath. Judas had never, ever been saved at all. Now, if you were to give Judas a questionnaire, and say, “Judas, are you saved?” he could have said, “I’m a church member.” “I didn’t ask you that. Judas, are you saved?” “I’m a charter member.” “I didn’t ask you that. Judas, are you saved?” “I am a disciple.” “I didn’t ask you that. Judas, are you saved?” “I’m the treasurer.” “I didn’t ask you that. Judas, are you saved?” You know, this is kind of a frightening thing, when you think about it. There are many people who are going to go to hell surrounded by baptismal certificates, Sunday school attendance pins, and receipts for church offerings, who have never been saved. “Many shall say unto 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 Jesus said, “then will I say unto them, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” There’s a lesson here concerning salvation, friend. You have got to have a bath. Now, that brings up the

question: are you saved?

Now, nobody would have picked out Judas as being lost. When Jesus said, “One of you is going to betray me,” do you think that all of the others said, “It must be Judas.” No. They said, “Am I the one, Lord?” They didn’t say, “It must be Judas.” Judas was probably the most respected one in the group, outwardly. Question: If you have an organization, whom do you make treasurer? The one you trust the most. They elected this man as treasurer of the organization. Nobody said, “Well, yeah, it must be Judas who’s going to do this.” Judas, outwardly, looked so good. His biographical sketch was great. He was a man, outwardly, that showed great success, but he never had been saved. Now, listen to me. The Bible says, “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.” Have you been washed with the washing of regeneration? You know, the devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than he had the gutter.

There are many lost church members. The church, rather than being a force for evangelism, has become a field for evangelism. And some precious people in this church tonight, in this building, have their name on the roll of our church, but I sincerely, honestly, believe that there are some people who need to get saved tonight. If they were to die tonight—they’re members of this church—they would die and go to hell.

“Well, Pastor, the Bible says I’m to examine myself whether I be in the faith. What are the marks of whether or not I’m in the faith?” Well, let me just give you four of them; and I’m not going to digress here and preach another sermon, but let me just mention four things.

Do you want to know whether you’re saved or not? Do you have a love in your heart for Jesus Christ? I’m not asking, have you subscribed to some tenet about Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, I know the plan of salvation.” You’re not saved by the plan; you’re saved by the Man. Do you have a love in your heart for Jesus Christ? Do you know what I do? I find myself saying constantly, just walking about, “Jesus, I love You. I love You, Jesus.” And I do love Jesus. That may sound corny, but I love Jesus Christ with all of my heart. And I believe the mark of a disciple is that he loves the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, he’s going to love His Word.

I’ll tell you another mark that a person has if he has been born again. Not only is he going to love Jesus; he’s going to hate sin. Do you hate sin? Has there come a time in your life when you said, “I’m sick and tired of this way.” It’s not just that you have some fire insurance. You have a desire in your heart to be holy. Do you have a desire to be holy? Do you hate sin? People say, “If I believe in eternal security, I’d get saved and sin all I want to.” I sin all I want to. I sin more than I want to. I don’t want to. If I could sign a contract I’d never sin again, I’d sign it right now, on the spot. Yes, I fail, but I tell you there’s a difference between before I got saved and after I’ve gotten saved. Before I got

saved, I was running to sin; now, I'm running from it. I don't want to sin. I had just as soon eat dirt as to willingly sin. Are you saved? Do you love Jesus? Do you hate sin?

I'll tell you something else that's going to mark you, if you really love the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to want to see the lost saved. You are going to have a burden for lost souls. You will never, no never, no never, never, ever, ever, ever convince me that you believe the gospel, that you're saved, twice-born, on your way to heaven, and you don't want others to go with you. That's ridiculous. How can you claim to be a child of God and believe the gospel, to believe there's a heaven to be gained, a hell to be shunned, a death to die, a judgment to face, and you're not concerned about the lost? If you do not have in your heart a passion to see people come to Jesus Christ, you have every reason to put a great big question mark after that thing you call salvation, because if you love Jesus, you're going to love what Jesus loves, and Jesus loves the lost. And it's just to me it's very clear that, if you are saved, you examine yourself.

I'll tell you one more thing. You're going to have the witness of the Spirit in your heart. "He that believeth on the Son," the Bible says, "hath the witness in himself." God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God. Now, what is the witness of the Spirit? The witness of the Spirit is not some emotional feeling. I've often told you that it goes beyond emotion. Nothing wrong with emotion; God gave us emotion. Emotion is a gift of God. And if you have an emotional love for Jesus Christ, I'm grateful. But the love that I'm talking about, and the witness of the Spirit, is deeper than that. What is the witness of the Spirit? It is an awareness that you belong to God. Not a feeling—an awareness. And, if you have it, you know what I'm talking about. God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Again, I remind you, beloved, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 5—the Bible says, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith."

There were twelve people there in that room. One of them was a phony. One of them was lost, and yet he was active. He was religious. He was serving. He went out with the others. Outwardly, he looked just as fine as anybody could look. And, tonight, you may be sitting in this church with an open Bible in your hand, taking notes, but you've never been saved. When Jesus said, "Ye are clean, but not all of you," He's teaching us that salvation, a personal experience, is essential. It is absolutely necessary.

II. Security Is Eternal

Now, here's the second lesson we're going to learn here tonight. Not only is salvation essential, but security is eternal. If you are saved, you will be kept saved. Look again in verse 10: "He that is washed needeth not to be washed again, except his feet."

That is, you don't have to keep getting saved. If you've been washed, if you've been saved, if you've been twice-born, you don't need to get saved over and over again. Now, you may get your feet dirty, but you don't need another bath. A Christian may sin. You know that is true, because the Bible teaches it, and you've experienced it.

You read the Bible, and think of the saints in the Bible who had dirty feet. Noah sinned, got his feet dirty. Abraham sinned, got his feet dirty. David sinned and got his feet dirty. Simon Peter sinned and got his feet dirty. Even the great apostle Paul sinned and got his feet dirty. They didn't need to be saved again; they didn't need to have another bath. But none of us is perfect. We sin. First John 1:8 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But see, friend, getting your feet dirty doesn't mean that you have to get saved all over again. There are some people who believe that, once you get saved, that's fine, but if you sin, you lose your salvation. Well, friend, can you imagine what that would be? How many times a day would you have to get saved? Think about it. You say, "Well, Adrian, I don't sin, because I don't rob banks, and I don't use God's name in vain, and I don't steal." Friend, do you know what sin is? The Bible says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, it is sin." Do you always, in every instance, do everything you ought to do? The Bible says, "The thought of foolishness is sin." Think about that. The Bible says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." I mean, we've lowered the bar so much that we think sin is an axe murderer or something like that. If you could lose your salvation because of dirty feet, if you could lose your salvation because some sin came into your life, may I ask you a question? How much sin would it take? If you could lose your salvation because you sin, let me tell how much sin it would take—one half of one sin would damn you to hell forever. I wouldn't trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven, much less some of my bad ones. You see, Jesus said, "You don't need another bath, Peter, but you've got to have your feet washed. You've got dirty feet." He's talking here spiritually.

Now, the Lord is going to keep you. Why? Well, because the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 14: "For by one offering hath he sanctified forever them that are sanctified." "For by one offering he hath sanctified us forever." One offering. Did you know that, if you got saved and lost again, Jesus would have to die again? He hath sanctified you forever by his one offering. Jesus said, "You don't need another bath." Philippians 1:6—what does it say? I think we'll put it on the screen. Look at it—Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Your salvation was not your idea.

We sang Amazing Grace. And I told you that God sought us, God bought us, God

brought us. It's of God. Salvation is of God. That's what Jonah said in the belly of the whale: "Salvation is of God." It is a God thing. Who began the good work in you? The Holy Spirit. He's the one who commenced it. Who convicted you of sin? The Holy Spirit of God. Who brought you to salvation? The Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit was the convicter. He is the converter. And, friend, He is the completer. He is the completer. Now, if you began it—I mean, if it's your work—then it's not going to be finished. But He does not have an unfinished work. "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it." Jesus is the one who is going to keep His own. He says, "Father, those that you've given me I have kept." And He will keep. And we learn here that Jesus said, "You don't have to keep on getting bathed. You don't have to have another bath. If you have been washed, you're washed. Now, I need to wash your feet, but you don't have to get saved all over again."

When I teach my Discovery Class, I give a challenge to the people in that class, when I talk about eternal security. And, whimsically, I say, "If you want a free vacation somewhere in the world, I'll buy you one, all expenses paid, if you can show me anywhere in the Bible where anybody ever got saved twice." You can't find it. Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find where anybody is saved twice. I don't make that offer because I've got a lot of cash to disperse, but I've yet to have anybody take me up on it. Nowhere in the Bible will you find where anybody has ever been saved twice. He that is washed doesn't need to be washed again, but he gets his feet dirty—he gets his feet dirty. There's a lesson concerning salvation. Make sure that you're washed. Salvation is essential. There is a lesson concerning security. Security is eternal.

III. Sanctification Is Extended to You

There's a third lesson, a lesson concerning sanctification. Sanctification is extended to you. Look, if you will, in verse 8: "Peter said unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Now, the word part there, the word *meta* means, literally, fellowship. "Peter, if you don't let me wash your feet, we're not going to have fellowship together." The word literally means nothing in common. Now, they were at the table. Do you know how they, do you know how they knew? I shouldn't do this, but, David, would you lie down on the floor? We didn't rehearse this. You just lie down right there. All right now, lie down on your side. All right, put your elbow there. Now, I'm going to lie down here like this. This is the way they ate in Bible times, around a table just like this. You know, the Bible says that John laid his head on Jesus' chest. That means he's right here. He had the place of honor. Here's Jesus. You be Jesus, and I'll be John. All right now, what about the guy way down there? Do you know what he's doing? He's smelling my feet. You think about it.

Somewhere in this thing, as we're around the table, somebody has somebody's feet in their face. All right, you can get up. Thank you. Now, can you imagine? Yeah, give him a hand. See what you have to do. Now, listen to me, folks. This is the way they ate. Can you imagine being around a table for a meal, and somebody with stinking feet in your face? Jesus said, "Now, look. If we're going to have fellowship, you've got to get your feet washed." Now, He was using a literal experience, but He was teaching a spiritual truth, because, when we come to fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, we don't want dirty feet.

Now, what can you do about dirty feet? Number one: You can ignore them—and a lot of Christians do. They just get dirtier. Number two: You can deny them—but they still stink. And you're just an old Pharisee, when you've got dirty feet and you deny them. But, number three: You can confess them, and let Jesus wash them. First John 1:9: "If we confess our sin, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We can get our dusty, dirty feet clean so we're ready to have fellowship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so, Jesus is extending to us sanctification, not salvation. We have that, if we're saved, but we need to get our spiritual feet clean and washed.

IV. Service Is Expected

And now, the next lesson, and we're just about finished. Service is expected—service is expected. Now, Jesus is serving His disciples, but now notice what He says to them. Begin in verse 12: "So after he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily—that means truly, truly—I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that sent greater than him that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Now, here's the Creator of the world, the Lord and Master, who is washing their feet. He left the throne for a towel. The Bible says in verse 4, "he laid aside his garments." That's so descriptive of what of what I preached this morning. "Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation." That is, He laid aside His garments of glory that He had in heaven, out of the ivory palaces, into this world of woe. Jesus Christ came to serve. Now, if you're too big and too important to serve, you're bigger and more important than Jesus Christ. I've seen people too big for God to use and to serve; I've never seen one too small for God to use and to serve. I've never seen one too small. There's a lesson concerning service.

Service is expected.

Now, Jesus had laid aside His robes of glory, born in a smelly manger. He paid taxes. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. About the only possession He had when He died was a seamless robe. But there He is washing feet. He is an example.

Now, Jesus wasn't starting a church ceremony. There are some churches today that have foot washing. I don't ridicule people for that. As a matter of fact, sometime, it might be a blessing to have a foot washing service. But there's nowhere in the Bible that this was ever taught as a ceremony, like the Lord's Supper or baptism. Our Lord was not talking about a new ordinance, a new church ceremony. There's no evidence in the Bible of that. As a matter of fact, foot washing is an act of humility; and humility, in my estimation, may cease to be humility, if you put it on show. Our Lord is teaching personal service to one another, even as I preached this morning Ephesians 4:32: "Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." You see, what our Lord was doing is saying, "Peter, I am going to forgive you your trespasses. I'm going to wash your feet." Well, if Jesus has forgiven me my trespasses, I need to forgive you your trespasses. That's what it's all about. "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you need to wash one another's feet." There are people whose feet you need to wash spiritually, because Jesus has washed our feet. Galatians chapter 6, verses 1 and 2: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves."

There are people in this church who have dirty feet. They need our love, not our condemnation. Somebody has said the church is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded. There are so many who need it. Remember, I said this morning there's one thing you will never, ever do; and that's look down upon someone while you are washing their feet. As a matter of fact, I believe that the Holy Spirit of God, if you are listening, is speaking to you right now about somebody whose feet you need to wash—not literally, spiritually. You remember what Jesus said: "What I do, you don't know now, but you will know later." I'll guarantee you Peter knew later, because Peter had cursed and sworn and denied Jesus, and Jesus forgave him and restored him. Simon Peter didn't get saved all over again. Jesus said, "Simon, I prayed for you that your faith fail not." It never did fail, but his feet got dirty. He cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you want to serve? You know how the world judges a person? By how many servants he has. Jesus measures us by how many people we serve. Forty days of purpose. God has a place of service for you. Do you believe that? I hope you do. You say, "Well, I'm too important to wash feet." Well, I feel sorry for you.

I want you to imagine something tonight. I want you to imagine that door up here

opening, and I want you to imagine the Son of God in the flesh, walking out of that door, the first time we've ever seen Him in the flesh. One day, we will see Him in the flesh. There's a man in the glory. But I want you to imagine Jesus coming out that door, and He has a towel around His loins, and He has a basin of water. And He comes up to you, and He says, "May I wash your feet?" You would say, "No, no, Lord Jesus. You can't wash my feet. Lord, You can't kneel before me and wash my feet." And He'd say to you, "If I don't wash you, you can't have any fellowship with me." And the tears would begin to come down your face, and you'd say, "Yes, Lord, You can wash my feet. Yes, Lord, oh, thank You, Jesus." Can you imagine Him washing your feet? And then, suppose the Lord were to say to you, "Now, will you wash my feet?" what would you say? You'd say, "Oh, yes, Lord, yes. Yes, gladly, gladly, I'll wash your feet. Thank You, Jesus, that I can wash your feet." You'd be thrilled to do that, wouldn't you? Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, I would, if I could, but I can't." Yes, you can. Listen to me. Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these, my brothers, you've done it to me." Now, listen—listen. If you won't wash somebody else's feet, you're not worthy to wash Jesus' feet. "Inasmuch as you've done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me. If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." How dare we go around refusing to forgive and restore and renew. Our Lord expects us to be in the foot washing business. There ought to be no animosity, no unforgiving spirit. "Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet."

Conclusion

Four lessons. Salvation is essential. Make sure you've had a bath. Security is eternal. Once you're washed, you don't need to get another washing. Number three: Sanctification is extended. Our Lord is willing to wash your feet and to put you into fellowship. Number four: Service is expected. The Lord who's washed our feet wants us to wash one another's feet.

Would you bow in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And would you pray, "Lord Jesus, wash my feet." If your heart has become defiled, let the Lord cleanse it. Really, it's your heart, not your feet. Your feet are only an illustration of the heart. "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin. and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Friend, I've got happy news for you. There is not one reason in the world that anyone in this building cannot be crystal clear and pure as the driven snow. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin." Thank God. Hallelujah. Why carry the baggage of sin around? Be clean and be delivered by the grace of God.

Now, some need to examine themselves tonight. We've had several today who were baptized, who've come to see that they were religious but never truly saved. These were not hypocrites; these were wonderful people, but they missed salvation. Is there genuine love in your heart for the Lord Jesus? Is there a genuine hatred for sin? Are you concerned about lost souls? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God? If not, perhaps you need to come tonight. and say, "I want to get it settled. I want to know that I know that I'm saved." Judas kissed Jesus. He kissed the door to heaven, and went to hell. You can be so close, and so far away. Would you pray a prayer like this, if you're not certain that you're saved: Lord Jesus, I don't want mere religion; I want a spiritual bath. I want to be clean, and only You, by Your grace, can cleanse me. Lord Jesus, You died to pay for my sin. Lord Jesus, You shed your blood for me. Tonight, right now, I receive You into my life, by faith, as my Lord and Savior. Forgive me. Cleanse me. Wash me. Save me, Jesus. Save me. Ask Him to do it. Believe He will. Don't look for a sign, or ask for a feeling; just stand on His Word. Did you ask Him sincerely? Then thank Him. Say, "Thank You for doing it." Just say, "I lay claim to it by faith, for You said I'm justified by faith. I put my faith in You, Jesus, once and for all, now and forever. Thank You for saving me. And, Lord Jesus, not only do I receive You, but I yield my life back to You. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And help me, Jesus, never, ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, dear Savior. Amen."

Foot Washing

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 23, 1990

Main Scripture Text: John 13:1–17

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

JOHN 13:5

Outline

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Introduction

Turn to the gospel of John tonight, and I want to talk to you about spiritual foot washing. I don't know whether you've ever been in a church that practiced literal foot washing. I don't believe that our Lord meant for us to have foot washing as an ordinance or as a service, and I'll talk to you about that later on. But I do believe with all of my heart that Jesus desires that we wash one another's feet.

I remember some years ago we were traveling in Israel. And we had traveled for many days, packed and unpacked. And on this particular day, we took one of the harder and yet more exciting tours, and it was down from the holy city, Jerusalem, down to the hellish city, Jericho; that is, the pagan city. Now Jericho is located right near the Dead Sea. And the Dead Sea is the lowest spot on earth, 1300 feet below sea level. And in the summertime the air is like a coat of lead. And there's dust and the heat, one hundred-five, -ten, -fifteen degrees sometimes down there by the Dead Sea. And we

went to a place called Elisha's Fountain. And I can see the thing in my mind as we backed the bus up there and got out to look, and there was a beautiful Poinciana tree there, gorgeous red color. The sky was blue. And coming out of the mountainside was an ice cold stream of water. It's the fountain that they call Elisha's Fountain. Oh, about that wide was the little stream that was running there. Maybe six feet wide. And I couldn't resist it. I sat down by that stream and I took off my shoes. I put my feet in that water. Folks, that was worth a hundred dollar bill. I don't know of anything that was better than just to put those dogs in that stream and take my hands and massage those feet. It felt so good, so good.

And as I thought about that, I thought about foot washing in Bible times, because that is a hot and a dusty land. And what the custom was in that day was this: When you would come into a house, there may not be a stream going by there, but if it was a house of any means, of any wealth, there would be, just inside the door, a basin. And it would be filled with cool water. And if the house happened to have servants, there would be a servant there who would be dressed with an apron around him, very much like someone who might shine your shoes; only he would get on his knees, and you'd come in, he'd slip the sandals from off your feet and you would put your foot there in that icy water, and then he would take and massage your feet like this and then take that towel and dry your feet. It would relax. It would refresh. It would renew.

You know, I really think that's something we ought to institute today in our homes. What a blessing and what a thrill, and what a time of refreshment it would be to have your feet washed. And the ladies would like it. It would help keep the house a lot cleaner and the carpets, I'm certain, would last a lot longer. But you have to remember that was a custom in Bible times.

Now begin reading here in John chapter 13. "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him—that is, that the devil had put into the heart of Judas to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver—and Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. And after that he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet..."

Now notice, Jesus is at slave labor. This is what a servant would do. But their Lord and Master is washing their feet. "...and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." And, friend, that's the key to the whole passage right there. Now,

obvious, Peter could see that Jesus was washing feet, so there is more than meets the eye. That's what verse 7 says. There is a lesson here that is beyond what is taking place physically, because Jesus said, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but later you will understand it." "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And Peter says, "Well, if it's that important, just bathe me all over." "And Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."

Now He doesn't mean that Peter is not all clean, but what He means is that not all of the disciples are clean. "For he knew who should betray him; therefore he said, Ye are not all clean." That is, He knew that Judas was still unclean. "So after that he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye not what I have done unto you? You call me Master and Lord; and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him." And then the concluding verse, verse 17: "If you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Now the Bible says that the Lord Jesus is getting ready to go back to heaven. He knows that He's come from heaven. He knows that He's going to heaven. And having loved His disciples while He was in the world, He loved them right up to the end. He never stopped loving them.

And may I just tell you parenthetically before I get into the heart of this message, He never stops loving you. There is nothing you can do to make Him love you any less, and there's nothing you can do to make Him love you any more. *He doesn't love you because you're valuable; you're valuable because He loves you. He doesn't change you so He can love you; He loves you so He can change you.* He just loves us unconditionally. Oh, blissful, wonderful thought. We are the recipients of the grace love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And may I tell you that He loves you every moment of every minute of every hour of every day of every week of every year of all of our lives. He is pouring out His love to you. And He will love you right to the end.

And so the Lord Jesus, knowing He's going to heaven, knowing that He came from heaven, loving the disciples, He lays aside His garments, girds Himself with a towel, gets down on His knees, and takes the feet of fishermen, the feet of fishermen and washes those big old, knobby feet. And then He says, "As I have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Now verse 7 tells us there is a great, great lesson here, something to learn and something that Simon Peter and the other disciples would

learn later on as they reflected upon the events of the next several weeks; something that they would learn hereafter. May I give you four wonderful truths that come to my heart as I look at this passage?

I. Salvation Is Essential

Number one truth is this: That salvation is essential. Salvation is essential. Now look, if you will, for example, beginning in verse 8: “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needed not save to wash his feet—that is, he doesn’t need anything washed if he’s already had a bath, but his feet—but is clean every whit—or all over. Now watch this next statement: “and you are clean, but not all of you.” And then the next statement. “For he knew who should betray him...”

So when our Lord Jesus Christ here is talking about being clean, He is not talking about physical dirt. He’s talking about spiritual dirt. You say, “Pastor, how do you know he’s talking about spiritual defilement?” Because the Bible says, “You’re not all clean.” And He spoke of Judas who had the defilement of sin in his heart. So what our Lord is saying is that salvation is like a bath. When you get saved, it’s like bathing. It’s like having the defilement, the filth of sin taken away from us.

Now there are many verses that teach us that when we’re saved we’re washed. Let’s look at just a few of them. For example, look in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25 now. Just turn with me tonight because it’s a little Bible study and it won’t hurt you to use your Bible. So turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5 and look with me in verse 25. The Bible says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” That is, the Word of God is to our souls what water is to our bodies when we take a bath. Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.” And, dear friend, this book has the power to wash you and to make you clean. There is the washing of water by the Word. Now just go on through your Bible to the book of Titus for a moment and look in Titus, chapter 3 and verse 5. Titus chapter 3 and verse 5. The Bible says that we’re saved, but how are we saved. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”—now watch it—“by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” When you’re regenerated, you’re washed. God removes the filth, the stain, the blur, the blemish, the blot of sin. He just takes it out.

Then read with me Revelation chapter 1 and verse 5. I’m just giving you some Scriptures tonight to show you that salvation is pictured in the Word of God as a bath. Revelation chapter 1 and verse 5. The Bible says that the book of the Revelation is,

“From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.” And then it describes this phrase to Him. “...Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

All right. Now we're washed in the Word. We're washed in His blood. See, that's what salvation is. Salvation is a bath. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? You see, that's so absolutely essential. Now, Judas was there and Judas was a church member, but Judas was not washed because Jesus said, “You're clean, but not all of you are clean.”

Now that brings me to say this: As I look out at this congregation tonight, I know, after being a pastor for more than a quarter of a century, that there are a great number of church members who are listening to me tonight who are not saved right in this building tonight. You're not saved. You've never been washed. You've been starched and ironed, but you've never been washed. You have a form of godliness, but you've never been saved. You say, “Pastor, are you trying to get me to doubt my salvation?” No, but I am trying to get you to examine your salvation. Second Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 5 says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...” Are you saved? You say, “I must be saved. I'm a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. I've been a member of this church for years. I believe what you preach, Adrian Rogers.” That won't save you. Let's ask Judas. “Judas, are you saved?” “Well, I'm a church member.” “Well, Judas, I didn't ask you this. Judas, are you born again?” Ha, ha. “I'm a charter member.” “Judas, have you been washed in the blood?” “Well, I work in the church. I'm the treasurer of the church.” “Judas, are you saved?” “Oh, I've been taught by Jesus Christ. I'm a died-in-the-wool Baptist.” Friend, you'd better be a washed-in-the-blood Baptist.

There are a lot of folks who are religious but lost. Judas was one of them. He was a church member. He sat at the feet of Jesus Christ. He walked with other disciples. He gave his money. He did good deeds. He was sent out to preach. He did all of these other things. He had, he was of an impeccable reputation. Who do you make the treasurer of any organization? Don't you make a man the treasurer who has a good reputation? When Jesus said, “Someone's going to betray me,” they didn't point the finger at Judas and say, “I bet it's that scalawag.” No! They asked, “Could it be me?” But nobody said, “I bet it's Judas.”

Friend, the question is this: Have you been saved? Do you know that you're saved? You say, “Pastor, how can I know?” I thought about that this afternoon. And I said, “Adrian, how do you know you're saved?” Well, first of all, I've done what Jesus said to do to be saved. I've trusted Him. But you say, “Adrian, how do you know whether you really trusted Him? How do you know whether it was real?”

A. **A Love for Jesus**

May I give you what I believe are the four marks of any person who has ever truly met

Jesus Christ, so a person can know that he's more than a church member? Number one: There will be a love for Jesus Christ. Not just a faith in Christ, but a love for Jesus Christ. The Bible says that the love of the Father is to be in us. And what is the love of the Father? The love of the Father is Jesus Christ. God says, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And any man...when I look for a man to find out does that man love the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to know is there or is that man saved, I want to know is there a burning, passionate love for Jesus Christ. May I tell you I have faults and I hate them, and I have many of them, but the man that you're looking at tonight with all of his heart loves the Son of God? I love Jesus Christ. I mean, He is real to me. I love Him. I'm not ashamed to tell you I love the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. A Hatred for Sin

I'll tell you another sign that a man knows that he's saved. He has a hatred for sin. Jesus did not come to save you in your sin; He came to save you from your sin. Jesus Christ did not come to save you from hell; He came to save you from sin. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin." Not going to hell is the fringe benefit of being saved from sin. And if Jesus Christ can't save you from sin, He can't save you from hell. You say, "Adrian, don't you sin anymore?" Yes, I sin sometimes. I stumble and fall. You say, "What do you do?" None of your business. Let me tell you something, friend. I have sins and I have faults, and as I've said, I hate them.

But I'm going to tell you something else. I had rather willingly eat dirt than to willingly sin with my eyes open. Nothing would make me happier than to know I would never sin again. And one day when I meet the Lord Jesus, I'm made like Him, I'll be done with sin. But when I gave my heart to Jesus, there was something that changed in me. Before I was saved I was running to sin; now I'm running from it. Dear friend, there's a change, there's a change.

C. A Desire to Witness

I'll tell you a third, I'll tell you a third mark when a man knows the Lord Jesus Christ, when he's truly saved. He has a desire to see other people come to know Jesus Christ. Don't tell me that you're saved, don't tell me that you're twice born, don't tell me that you have been born above if you don't want to share it. Friend, if you can't give it away, you ought to give it up. I mean, can you tell me that you know the difference for all eternity between heaven and hell and you don't want others to know that? You'll never convince me that you're saved. If you are saved, I'll tell you this: You are terribly backslidden if you don't have a heartbeat, a desire to see other people come to know Jesus Christ.

From the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ to this very moment, from the moment as a teenage boy I said yes to Christ. To this moment there has been a desire

in my heart for others to know Jesus Christ. From that very moment I wanted my brother saved first out. I wanted my older brother to know Jesus Christ. And I wanted others around me, the guys that I played football with and the guys that I went to school with, I wanted them to know Jesus Christ. It's the mark of, it's a trait of the twice-born.

D. Evidence of the Holy Spirit

And I'll tell you another way that you can know, dear friend, and that is the witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart. The Bible says God's spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Now you say, "What is the witness of the Spirit, Adrian? Is it an emotional feeling?" No, not necessarily an emotional feeling. "Is it being happy?" Not necessarily so. You don't prove that you're saved because you're happy all the time. You wouldn't be happy all the time. You'd get sick and tired of being happy all the time. It would be like having ice cream for every meal. You're not supposed to be happy all the time. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. You're to have joy all of the time. There's a difference. But whether it is joy or sorrow or happiness or pain, there is someone, something inside of me that says, "Adrian, you belong to Jesus Christ." I cannot describe it to you. I cannot explain it to you. It is more than an emotion. It is an awareness - God's spirit bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. And, oh, how my heart yearns tonight. Oh, listen to me, people. How my heart yearns that those of you who come to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night; those of you who sing in the choir; those of you who serve as ushers; those of you who teach in the Sunday school; those of you who serve on the committees, take a warning from this passage of Scripture when Jesus said, "You're clean, but not all of you." And He spoke of Judas. How possible it is for you to be a church member, a staff member. That's what Judas was. He was the counterpart of a minister, an apostle, and yet he had never been saved. And so, the first lesson I learn when Jesus said, "You're clean, but not all of you," is this: That salvation is essential. It is so essential, not that you just work in the church, not just that you're religious, but that you have the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

II. Security Is Eternal

Second lesson I want you to learn. Not only is salvation essential, but security is eternal. Once you are saved, you are eternally saved. Now continue to read. Verse 8: "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet..." I feel like saying, "Peter, you'd better let Him wash it. You're about to put it in your mouth." "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered and said, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but my hands, but also my hands and my head." Now look at verse 10 now. "Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed does not need to be washed again except to have his feet washed." Free

translation. Once you have a bath, you don't have to keep on getting a spiritual bath. One spiritual bath will do you. But you have to keep on getting your feet washed. Now what does He mean by this? That once you get saved, once you're born again, once you have that spiritual bath, once there is the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, once you're washed in the Word and washed by the blood, once is enough – but you still get your feet dirty. As you go about in this defiled world, there is no possible way that you're going to walk through this world without sometimes getting your spiritual feet defiled. Now remember, He's not talking about literal dirt; He's talking about spiritual dirt. A Christian may sin. Read the Bible. Noah sinned. Abraham sinned. David sinned. Peter sinned. Paul sinned. First John 1, verse 8 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." There's nobody here who has, does not sin sometime after he's been saved. Say amen. You know it is true.

A preacher was preaching on sinless perfection; at least preaching against the notion of sinless perfection, that we're sinlessly perfect in this life, and thought he'd have a little testimony service. He said, "Does anybody, is there anybody here who never sins, would you stand?" Nobody stood. Then he said, "I want to ask a question, another question. Is there anybody here who knows a perfect person who never sinned?" One man stood up in the back. He said, "Sir, you know a person who has never sinned, never made a mistake, hasn't sinned at all?" He said, "Well, I've never met him, but I've heard about him." He said, "Well, who is he?" He said, "It is my wife's first husband."

But what Jesus is saying here is once you've had a bath, you don't need another one. Those of you who don't believe in eternal security, let me give you a little assignment. I want you to do some Bible study. And if you can find what I ask you to look for, I'll give you a prize. Say, I'll give you a new automobile. What kind do you want? Let's make it...want a Mercedes? Okay. A Mercedes. Or if you want something else, you just come and ask me and I'll give it to you if you can find this in the Bible, okay? Just find for me in the Bible any place where anybody was saved twice. Just find it. You won't find it. You can't find it in the Bible. Once a man has had a bath, that's it, Jesus said. You don't have to keep getting a spiritual bath, but you do have to get your feet washed. No one is ever saved twice, and I'll tell you why. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 14. The Bible says, "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

You see, when Jesus died, He perfected you forever. That one offering saves you forever. Now suppose you got saved and lost it? Then in order for you to get saved again, you know what would have to happen? Jesus would have to come and die again, because, you see, when He died, you got your hand stamped, "Good for one salvation only." I mean, that's it. That's it, friend. If that one messes up, then you're going to have

to get Jesus to come and die again. “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

And so, thank God, hallelujah, that when He saves us, He keeps us saved.

Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” Now, friend, if you lose it, it’s because Jesus didn’t finish it, or else you started it. Now if you started it, obviously, you can lose it. If He started it, He’s going to finish what He started. “Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it....”

Have you ever started anything you couldn’t finish? Nod your head. When I was a kid, I used to try to build model airplanes. The boy across the street, he built some beauties. I’d go down and find me a model airplane kit and I’d get started. I never could finish one of those things. Never got one in the air. I mean, I would work a while and then somehow I’d lose interested or I’d mess the thing up.

A. The Holy Spirit Is the Convictor

Now, dear friend, Jesus finishes what He starts. Actually, the Holy Spirit is the One who does that work in you. Let me tell you how you got saved. First of all, the Holy Spirit convicted you of your sin. Isn’t that true? I mean, you know, we love Him because He first loved us. Who was it that told you you were a sinner, that you needed to be saved? That was the Holy Spirit. He convicted you of sin.

B. The Holy Spirit Is the Convincer

And then after the Holy Spirit was the convictor, the Holy Spirit was the convincer. He convict, He convinced you of Jesus Christ. He pointed you to Jesus Christ and told you that if you believe on Jesus you’ll be saved.

C. The Holy Spirit Is the Converter

And after He was the convictor and the convincer, He was the converter. It was the Holy Spirit of God that worked that change in you. You were born of the Spirit. Now watch it.

D. The Holy Spirit Is the Completer

He is the One who was the convictor, the convincer, the converter, and He’s also the completer. He’s also the completer. “He who hath begun a good work in you will complete it....” He will. He’s not going to have any unfinished work. The convincer, convictor, converter is the completer.

And so, I have here a lesson concerning eternal security. You say, “Well, wait a minute, pastor. What if I get saved and sin after I get saved?” What do you mean what if? I’m not being light on sin, because if you sin, you’re bound to suffer. But, friend, if you think walking the straight and narrow keeps you saved, you’re not going to make it, because I want to ask you a question. If sin can take you out of the hand of God, how

much sin? Well, you say, “A lot of it would.” Oh, so you think God’s going to overlook a little of it, is that what you think? Do you think that the thrice-holy God is going to overlook just some sin but not all sin?

Friend, you don’t know how holy God is. If it takes your life to get you to heaven, you’re not going to make it. You’re not going to make it. The best of us are not going to make it. I’ll tell you something, my friend. I wouldn’t trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven, much less some of the bad ones. You see, if sin can take you out, you’re not going to make it. Friend, we are saved by the grace of God and we’re kept by the grace of God. And Jesus said, “Once you’ve had a bath, you don’t have to come back and get another one.” Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find where anybody was ever saved twice. You say, “I don’t agree with that.” All right, do your Bible study. Come back next week and make me give you a car in front of all these people, okay. You’re not going to find it.

III. Sanctification Is Expected

Friend, I want to tell you that once a man becomes a child of God, he is saved for all eternity. Now salvation is essential. Church work is not enough. Jesus said, “You’re clean, but not all of you.” But, my dear friend, security is eternal. Once you are saved and once you have that salvation, it is eternal. Third thing: Salvation is essential, security is eternal, and sanctification is expected. When I tell you that because you’re once saved, always saved, does that mean that it makes no difference, therefore, how you live? Oh, perish the thought!

Look now in verse 8: “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Now Jesus was washing his feet. And Jesus said, “Peter, if you don’t let me wash your feet, you don’t have any part with me.” Now what does that mean – no part with me? The word *part, meta*, means “no fellowship with me.” I looked it up in several translations. One translation gave it literally this way: “If I don’t wash your feet, you have no fellowship with me.” The word means that, “You don’t have anything in common with me.” That is, “If you don’t let me wash your feet, Simon Peter, while you may not lose your salvation, you’re going to lose your fellowship with Me, the Son of God.”

Now remember that here they are at a supper. And if you’re at a supper in Bible times they would recline. They didn’t sit in chairs like we sit in chairs. They would lie around the table. That means that the person is here. My head is near this man’s feet. And that man’s head is near the next man’s feet. Do you see how important it is? How would you like to be at supper with your head near somebody’s unwashed feet? I mean, it just ruins the fellowship, the idea of being there at a supper, and whether it is somebody’s smelly feet or the hors d’oeuvres, you’re not quite certain.

What our Lord is saying is, “Look, Peter, salvation is essential, security is eternal, but sanctification is expected. If you don’t let Me wash your feet, it’s going to ruin the fellowship.” If you have dirty feet, what can you do? Well, you can ignore them. They’ll just get dirtier. You can deny that you have dirty feet. That’ll make you a Pharisee. Or you can confess them and bring them to Jesus and let Him cleanse you. You see, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

You know, it’s so, it’s so important that what Jesus said to Peter, “Peter, what I’m doing now you won’t understand, but you’ll understand later.” Do you know when that later was for Simon Peter? Simon Peter cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus. And Jesus looked at him with a look that broke his heart, and Jesus washed Peter’s feet spiritually. Peter didn’t have to get saved all over again. He was saved. Jesus had said to him, “Peter, I’ve prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” And we know that every prayer that Jesus has ever prayed has been answered. Jesus said, “Father, I thank You You always hear Me.” Peter’s faith couldn’t fail because Jesus was interceding for him, just like He’s interceding for me, just like He’s interceding for you. But Peter needed his feet washed. And, friend, so do you.

And may I tell you that this sanctification, this coming to Jesus daily, every day I have to say, “Lord Jesus, wash my feet.” I may not put it in those words. But every day I have to ask the Lord to cleanse me. And I want to tell you, early this morning I got on my knees and the Lord showed me some things about my heart that I wasn’t aware of, and I had a wonderful time this morning. As I got off my knees with joy and purity and could say it, sing it, and mean it – “Nothing between my soul and the Savior.” And, dear friend, every morning we need to say, “Lord Jesus, I’ve been saved. I’ve had a bath. But, Lord, this world is so defiled. It’s so filthy. My feet are dirty.” But, my dear friend, if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

IV. Service Is Enjoyable

Let me give you the fourth lesson in this passage. Not only is salvation essential. Not only is security eternal. Not only, dear friend, is sanctification expected. But service is enjoyable. Notice in verse 17. Jesus said, “If you know these things, happy are ye if you do them.” Now what things is He talking about? Well, look, if you will, in verse 12: “After he had washed their feet and had taken his garments and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye not what I have done unto you? You call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not

greater than his lord, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent them.”

Now here’s the Lord Jesus serving His disciples. He takes the role of a servant. Verse 4 said He laid aside His garments. That just pictures the Lord Jesus and all that He did. He left glory. He laid aside that realm of glory. He was born in a manger. He said, “The birds have nests, and, and the foxes have holes; the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” When He wanted to pay His taxes, He had to get a coin out of fish’s mouth. When He was buried, He had to be buried in a borrowed tomb. Oh, the humility of the Lord Jesus. And Jesus here is saying, “Look, I know that I’ve come from the Father. I know that I am going to the Father. And yet I am washing your feet. If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another’s feet.”

Conclusion

Now Jesus Christ is not starting a new ordinance. The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper we have. The ordinance of baptism we have. Some churches believe there are three ordinances: baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and foot washing. And I’m not here to make a big argument about it. But may I tell you, there’s no evidence in the New Testament that foot washing was ever taught as an ordinance. Foot washing is an act of humility, but humility ceases to be humility when it’s put on show. I mean, if you’re going to have a foot washing service, and everybody says, “Make sure your feet are clean because today we’re going to have foot washing.” No, that’s not the foot washing of the Bible. This was a very practical thing, very practical service that the Lord Jesus did so long ago. *Humility is not humility when it’s put on show.*

I heard about a man. They gave him a medal for his humility, and they took it away from him when he wore it. Humility is not humility when it’s put on show. This is not an ordinance that Jesus was teaching. But what Jesus was saying is, “Look, Simon Peter, I am willing to forgive your offences against Me. And when I forgive you, you ought to be willing to forgive one another. If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet....” And remember He’s not talking about literal dirt. “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s.” The Bible says we’re to be tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us. And the Bible says if a man be overtaken in a fault (Galatians chapter 6, verse 1), you, which are spiritual, restore him in a spirit of meekness.

Now, friend, let me tell you, in Bellevue Baptist Church there are a lot of saints that have dirty feet. We’ve sinned against one another. Sometimes in the church one brother will hurt another brother. Do you know what we need to do? We need to wash that brother’s feet. We need for forgive. We need to restore, to find that brother. Restore him, renew him, and refresh him. Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. Do you

know somebody who used to walk in fellowship in this church? Do you know somebody who used to teach in Sunday school? Used to be a deacon? Used to sing in the choir – and you don't see them anymore? He's been overtaken in a fault. You know what you need to do? You need to do the same thing for that person that Jesus did for Simon Peter, who cursed and swore and denied Jesus. You need to find that person and you need to humble yourself before that person. I'm going to tell you something, friend. Don't go to that person in a spirit of pride. You listen to your pastor tonight. There's one thing that is impossible to do, and that's to look down on someone while you're washing their feet. Isn't that true? I mean, you just can't do it. It's impossible. When we take the place of a servant, that is humility.

Let me tell you what real humility is. Real humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. Don't ever think lowly of yourself. How can you think lowly of yourself? You're a child of God. You're a royal blueblood. Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brothers. You're next of kin to the Holy Trinity. Jesus, knowing that He'd come from God, and went to God, laid aside His garments, took a towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet. Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. It is not thinking of yourself. Why don't you have to think of yourself? Because you know who you are. You see, you know who you are in the Lord Jesus. And, therefore, you don't have to worry about what people are going to think about you. It really doesn't make any difference. Jesus knew who He was.

Let me tell you about the grace of God. *The grace of God will humble a man without debasing him and will exalt a man without inflating him.* He is what he is by the grace of God. And, oh, there are so many people that need their feet washed, members of this church.

I'm finished with the message, but I want you to start your imagination motor going right now. I want you to imagine Jesus Christ walking through that door right up there, like I do on Sunday morning. I want you to imagine Him coming into this congregation in His literal body. Here He comes. Nail prints in His hands. Nail prints in His feet. Here comes the Lord Jesus wearing a diadem of glory in His resurrected body. He's coming right through that door. And let's say that the Lord Jesus has in His hands a basin of water. And He's girded with a towel, the Lord of glory. Here He comes. Now we're just imagining. And let's just imagine He walks right down these steps. You say, "Where's He going? What's He going to do?" And He walks right down here to the front, and down this aisle, and then He comes to you back there, of all of the people. And He stops right in front of you. And He says to you, "May I wash your feet?" What would you do? I mean, this is Jesus Christ Himself in the flesh. And He walks right up to you and He says, "May I wash your feet?" What would you do? I mean, would you let Him, with the nail prints in His hand, get down and wash your feet tonight? And with tears of humility and gratitude, you would say, "Lord, You want to wash my feet?" And He would

say, "If I don't wash your feet, I have no part with you." You would say, "All right, Lord. You may wash my feet." How would you feel if Jesus, with nail prints in His hand, were washing your feet tonight? Think about it. Use your imagination. And then suppose He were to say to you, "Would you wash his feet? Would you wash their feet, or would you wash My feet?" You would say, "Lord Jesus, if I could wash anybody's feet, Lord, I would love to wash Your feet. Oh, Lord Jesus, let me wash Your feet."

Jesus Outshines Them All

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 6, 2002

Main Scripture Text: John 13:1–30

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.”

JOHN 13:3–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. His Spiritual Insight
- II. His Sovereign Control
- III. His Seeking Grace
- IV. His Steadfast Mission
- V. His Sympathizing Love
- VI. His Solemn Justice

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn to John chapter 13, and we’re going to think tonight about the Lord’s Supper. This chapter is written in the context of the inauguration of the Lord’s Supper. About 2,000 years ago, a mother held a bouncing baby boy in her lap. She kissed his cheek, snuggled him up close, and said, “This is my darling baby. His name shall be called Judas.” A boy named Judas came into the world.

Now, since that time, I’ve met a lot of boys, had a lot of different names. I’ve met some Johns. I’ve met some Matthews. I’ve met some Philips. I’ve have met some Bartholomews. But I’ve never met a boy named Judas. I’ve heard of a dog named Judas, and a goat named Judas, but never heard anybody name a child Judas. As a matter of fact, the Bible said of this child that was born, “It would have been good for him if he had never been born.” He is the tragic story of a lost opportunity. And I don’t think there’s a greater tragedy in the Bible than the story of Judas. If you’ve been around churches very long, if you know anything about Christian history, you know it was Judas who was one of the twelve disciples who turned on Jesus, and sold Jesus, and betrayed Jesus, for thirty pieces of silver.

You know, I’m amazed at how cheaply some people will sell Jesus. Did you know I

believe there are some people in today's society who would give up coming to church before they would give up getting a new refrigerator? It's amazing the sense of values that some people have. For a handful of silver, here was a man who betrayed the Lord Jesus.

But our story tonight is not primarily about Judas, but about Jesus. And the story of Judas and his betrayal is but the black velvet on which the brilliant character of the Lord Jesus Christ is displayed.

You know, a jeweler, if he has a diamond, and he wants it to show off, he might put it on black velvet, and then shine a light upon it. And that's what we're going to do tonight. We're going to use this tragic story of the betrayal of Judas as the dark background on which we're going to see the multi-faceted and beautiful character of Jesus Christ. And that's the reason I've called the message, "Jesus Outshines Them All."

Chapter 13—let's begin to read: "Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And, supper being ended, the devil now having put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. And after that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? And, Jesus answered, and said unto him, What I do thou doest, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save, but to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; wherefore he said, Ye are not all clean. So after that he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye do well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And now He begins to speak of Judas again. "I speak not of you all. I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now, I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send

receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. And, when Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in his spirit, and testified, saying, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one to another, doubting of whom he spake. And now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of him, who it should be of whom he spake. He, then, lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop—that is, a morsel of bread—when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him—that is, into Judas—Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly. Now, no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought because Judas had the bag, that Jesus—that is the treasury bag, the money bag—that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things which we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He, then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night.”

That's the story. And it's a story worth reading over and over again. And I want you to know that this story takes place in the context of the Lord's Supper. And what an amazing contrast there is between Jesus and Judas, between this perfect one and this polluted one, between this holy one and this hellish one.

Now, as we look at this, I want us to see some facets of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I've said, Jesus outshines them all. And there are many, many things about the character of Jesus that are in this story. But would you learn six of them with me tonight, just six facets of the beautiful character of the Lord Jesus Christ and His multi-faceted character. And I love the Lord Jesus, and I believe you do.

I. His Spiritual Insight

Now, here's the first facet of Jesus' character that I want you to see against this dark background of His betrayal—and that is His spiritual insight. As you study this story, you find out that the Lord Jesus was keenly aware of what was going on, what had happened, and what was going to happen. Let me select a few verses for you.

Look in verse 3: “Jesus—now, look at the next word—knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.” Now, I'm going to stop reading right there. Forgive me for stopping a sentence in the middle. But the emphasis I want to make here is the omniscience, the knowing, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, skip on down to verse 18. Jesus says, concerning the disciples, “I speak not of you all (I know whom I have chosen), but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Now, what does that tell

me? That Jesus was not surprised by Judas' betrayal. Jesus was not shocked at what Judas did. Jesus knew beforehand what Judas would do. Let me give you some ancillary scriptures.

John chapter 6, verse 64: Jesus there, before this dark night, had said concerning the disciples, "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." From the very beginning, Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him. Now, why would Jesus want a double-crosser in the ministry, a crook for the treasurer? Well, I can tell you one thing. He wasn't taken by surprise. Some people think that Judas was saved and lost his salvation. No, Judas never was saved. He never believed. Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not.

And, again, John chapter 6, verses 70 and 71, make it even clearer: "Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon; for it was he that should betray him, being one of the twelve." Now, what I'm trying to say is I want you to see the great knowledge that our dear Savior had, even in His humanity. And, of course, He was tuning His ear to God the Father, who is above all, and in all, through all, and over all.

A wise man once said, "Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God?" I mean, God doesn't say, "Oh, you don't mean...do tell. Is that so?" Only God knows the future.

Now, the key here is in verse 19. Look at this. Jesus is talking about the fact that Judas is going to betray Him, and notice what He says in verse 19: "Now, I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." Now, if you have a King James Version of Scripture, like I have in front of me, you'll notice the word *he* is kind of in squiggly. It's leaning just a little bit, not quite as bold. It is what we call today, it is italicized. And what Jesus is literally saying, "I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you may know that I am." The word *he* is not really even there in the original. He just says, "that you may know that I am." Who is I AM? Jehovah God, the most holy name for God in all of the Scripture. And what He is saying is, "I'm going to let you know that I know that this has not taken me by surprise, that I AM." That is, the God who created the universes. When I thought of this, I thought of Psalm 139—you may flip to it—verses 1 through 4. It's written, Brother Jim, to the chief Musician, a Psalm of David. O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether." Now, he says here, "you've searched me." The word search means You pierced me through. Remember this morning when I talked about the Lord Jesus Christ who had eyes like a

flame of fire? He sees us, but He sees through us, but, thank God, He sees us through, also, if we know the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, He says, “There’s not a movement but what you see it. You know my standing up. You know my lying down.” There’s not a motive but what He knows it. Look in the last part of verse 2 of this psalm: “Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off.” There’s not a murmur but what He hears it. “There is not a word in my tongue, but, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.” So be careful—be careful—what you say tonight. Be careful what you say around the supper table. Be careful what you say in the secret chamber. God sees everything you do. God knows every thought.

I have a preacher friend. I mentioned him this morning in the sermon. His name is Peter Lord, a dear friend. I’ve known Peter for many, many years. Peter is one of the most eccentric, one of the most creative, one of the most different, men I’ve ever met. No telling what he would do. If you were a member of Peter’s church, you would stay on edge. On a particular time, Peter Lord got up in the attic of the church, up there above the ceiling, and the people came in, and the pastor was not on the platform. They had the song service, and then Peter began to speak, and he said, “Folks, this is your pastor, Peter Lord.” Well, they said, “Where is he?” He had a microphone up there. He had a hole in the ceiling. He’s looking down. He sees the entire, worship center, not as big as ours. And he said, “Never mind where I am.” He said, “You can’t see me, but I want you to know I see you.” And he said, “Mrs. Jones, I see you scratching your ear.” She put her hand down. “Mr. So-and-So, I see this; I see that.” And the whole congregation is saying, “How does he see me? Where is he? Is he in the front? Is he in the back? Where is he?” And he preached what I’m preaching tonight, that God sees our every move. If you thought about that, kids, would you pass notes in church tonight? If you thought about that, if He knows your thoughts, would your mind be gathering wool tonight, as we come to the Lord’s Supper? Think about it. You see, Jesus said, “Look, I know, I know, I know what is all is going to happen.” And so, one thing I see about our dear Lord is His great knowledge, His spiritual insight.

II. His Sovereign Control

Now, here’s the second thing I see about our Lord here: not only His spiritual insight, but His sovereign control. Now, He was not out of control. Don’t think that somehow something went wrong. Again, I go back to verse 3 in this chapter: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.” Look. Everything’s in the hand of Jesus. He’s got the whole wide world in His hands. Now, God never says, “Oh, I’m surprised,” and He never says, “Oops, I didn’t know that I was going to do that.” He knows exactly what is going to happen. Jesus is never surprised, and it follows, as night follows day, He is never out of control.

And where He does not rule, He overrules. Judas meant it for evil, but God used it for good.

Do you remember the story of Joseph who was sold into slavery and later became the Prime Minister of Egypt, as a providential chain of events? And he was the one who was used to save his people from famine, became a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sold by wicked brothers, betrayed, actually, sold, very much like Jesus was sold by Judas. And here's what Joseph said before his brothers, in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Judas meant it for evil, but God used it for good. God is always in sovereign control.

As I was preparing this, several other verses came to my heart. Isaiah 46, verse 10, speaks of God declaring the end from the beginning: "And from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." God knows the beginning and the end. Only God knows the future.

I told you on our sermon in our series on Revelation, the devil doesn't know the future. Listen to me. The devil's a knucklehead—he is!—to think that he could overthrow the Almighty. He doesn't know the future. If he knew the future, he would know that he's heading to hell. But he actually thinks, in his perverted, twisted mind, the deception of sin, that he can overcome the Almighty. Only God knows the future.

Think of how God is in control. Listen to the Book of Daniel chapter 4, verse 35: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven."

Now, you can let all of the people on this earth strut and dance and plan and prognosticate and posture. God says, "That's nothing—nothing. My armies are in the army of heaven, and he doeth his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Nobody can say, "God, You can't do it," and nobody can question Him what He does. He's God. Amen? He is God. He doesn't have to get your permission, so you might as well resign as ruler of the universe, and let Him take over.

Ephesians 1, verse 11, speaks of our God again: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Well, you say, "Was it God's will that Judas betray the Lord Jesus?" That brings up an interesting question. It was God's will that God would use that for our redemption. How God takes the wickedness of man, and the sovereignty of God, and puts them together in the crucible of His omnipotence, and works it for our good and His glory, is one of the amazing things, because, you see, the fact that Judas would betray the Lord Jesus Christ was prophesied by the prophet Zechariah. Put down Zechariah chapter 11,

verses 12 and 13: “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter—a goodly price that I was prised of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.” Now, that’s a direct prophecy. We don’t have time to unfold it altogether, but it prophesies the fact that Jesus would be sold for thirty pieces of silver, and then those thirty pieces of silver would be cast into the potter’s field. So, I want you to see His spiritual insight, but I want you to see His sovereign control.

And we’ve been studying in the Book of the Revelation all the works of the beast, the Antichrist, the dragon, the false prophet, and so forth. We’ve been thinking about 666, but I want you to know, when 666 shows up, 777 will be on the throne. Yeah. He’s the Lord. Judas is a type of the Antichrist. He is a literal type of the Antichrist. Judas and the Antichrist are the only two people in the Bible called the Son of Perdition. Judas is the only person in the Bible that says, “and the devil entered into him.” Other people may be demon-possessed, but the only one person in the Bible that I can ever find where it says, “the devil entered into him.” You know, some people say, “I’ve been wrestling with the devil all day long.” You flatter yourself. He put the weakest demon on you, bud. But here it is. Here it is that Judas is a type of the Antichrist, and with all of his wickedness and his evil machinations. Then I want you to see the sovereign control of Jesus, and agree with me that what Judas did is only the black velvet that makes us see that Jesus outshines them all, amen?

III. His Seeking Grace

Now, I want you to see a third thing of these character traits of the Lord Jesus: not only His spiritual insight, not only His sovereign control, but I want you to see His seeking grace—His seeking grace. Oh, I’m so glad that He is a Savior filled with grace and love. Look in verse 18. Jesus, speaking of the one who would betray Him, said, “I speak not of you all, for I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Now, Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him. He knew that ahead of time, and yet, here is the Lord Jesus Christ loving Judas, sitting at the table with Judas.

Now, Judas’ action was not apart from his own will. Don’t get the idea that Judas was some sort of a mechanical creature forced to betray the Lord Jesus. Judas, by his own choice, by his own will, by his own desire, betrayed Jesus. Judas was not a robot. Judas was not an unwilling victim. Judas was not some sort of a pawn in a cosmic game of chess. God’s grace was offered to Judas. Jesus endeavored to bring Judas to repentance with love, and with pleas of entreating, and with rebukes. In verse 5, we find

out that Jesus washed Judas' feet. In verse 11, Jesus gave Judas a warning. In verse 26, He gave him the ultimate act of hospitality, when He took the morsel of bread and handed it to him.

In Middle Eastern tradition, this was a way of expressing love. And it was not feigned love. Don't accuse my Lord of being a hypocrite, of doing one thing and believing another. Jesus was reaching out to Judas. Now, if God is responsible, and Judas is not responsible, then Judas is not to be blamed; he is to be pitied. He's a victim. He is not to be judged. But Judas became a traitor by his own choice, and then God placed his treachery, the treachery of Judas, into God's own plan, into the divine plan. Man rules, and God overrules.

You know, that ought to be a warning to us. People can be so very close to our Lord, and yet still be lost and forever damned. They can refuse the grace of God. Judas had incredible opportunities. He was basking in the light, and yet, living in darkness. He kissed the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the door; no one can enter in but by me." That means that this man kissed the door to heaven, and went to hell. Think how close he was, and yet, how far away he was. Judas understood the truth. He heard the truth. He posed as a believer. He had everyone fooled but Jesus—everyone. To whom do you give the responsibility of being the treasurer? The one you trust the most. It was Judas who held the bag. When Jesus said, "One is going to betray me," they didn't all say, "It must be Judas." They said, "Lord, am I the one? Who is going to betray You?" You see, Jesus had reached out to Judas. And what that ought to say to us is that we ought to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith.

Are you here tonight religious? Could it be that you've never been twice-born? Second Corinthians 13, verse 5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobate?" Could it be here tonight that you will go through this Lord's Supper, as Judas did that fateful night until he left, and yet, never really know the Lord Jesus Christ? The point is this: that Jesus loved Judas. Judas, by his own choice, did evil. Yes, God foresaw it. Yes, God prophesied it. Yes, God knew it. Nothing ever surprises Him. But there is His steadfast love. And Jesus did not merely practice what He preached; He preached what He practiced. He said we're to love our enemies; and this is what He did, as we're going to see in a moment.

IV. His Steadfast Mission

Now, here's the fourth thing I want you to see about the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to see His steadfast mission. Look in verse 20 of this chapter. Jesus now has given this scenario of His betrayal, and then He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you..."—now, whenever Jesus says, "Verily, verily," that means, pay attention; put up

your antenna—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” Now, this facet of His character I want to call His steadfast mission. Can you imagine what it would have been like for you to have been one of the twelve? To learn that there was a hypocrite in the midst? To learn that there was a traitor in the midst? That someone was going to betray the Lord Jesus? I mean, it could have filled them all with self-doubt, and wondering about their own credentials. There’s scandal. Is the ministry over? Has the whole thing—has the whole enterprise just unraveled? Now, what Jesus is saying to them right after all of this: “What Judas does, does not alter my cause, does not cancel the commission that I have given to you. And, yes, here’s a man who’s done wrong. He’s a man who will betray Me, but God is still with us, and the cause still stands.”

Now, what will happen, if you’re not careful, is some Judas will derail you from the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You’ll read somewhere, somehow, about some preacher or somebody who has done wrong, and you’ll say, “Well, that’s it.”

Friend, it’ll not happen, but suppose I go south on God. Are you going to quit serving God? Say no. “No, pastor, I’m not going to quit serving God. I’m not going to quit serving God, no matter what happens.” Don’t you get your eyes on the failure and the faults of some man for whom Jesus died. Keep your eyes upon Jesus, and remember the commission that He’s given you. Every now and then, you’ll hear of some so-called televangelist, or somebody who is guilty of these kind of hi-jinks, or we hear of hypocrites in the church. That doesn’t cancel out the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If some Judas moves to center stage, that’s just all the more reason for you to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And his failure does not diminish your call or your authority. Second Corinthians 5, verse 20: “Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ.” How pathetic it will sound at the judgment, if you say, “Well, there was some Judas, and, therefore, I stopped serving the Lord.” There have been hypocrites. There will be hypocrites. Every now and then, somebody says to me, “You know, Pastor Rogers, there are hypocrites in the church.” I say, “Ohhhh, you don’t mean it? Ohhhh. I just think I’ll resign right now.” No. Listen, friend. There are some lawyers who are shysters; some doctors who are quacks, but if you need legal advice, you’ll probably find a lawyer, and if you get sick, most likely, you’ll look up a doctor. And there’s some money that’s counterfeit, but I notice you haven’t put all yours in the furnace. No. The hypocrite only proves the validity and the worthwhileness of the real. Men don’t counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit \$50 bills. And it’s the counterfeit that proves the validity of the real.

Have you ever been out at nighttime on a crystal clear night, and the stars nestle in the bosom of the sky like a chandelier, and then you see streaking across the sky what

is called a falling star, and it's gone? How many of you have ever seen anything like that? Yeah. And what does anybody say who is there? They say, 'Look, a falling star!' And, friend, there are gazillions of stars up there shining bright that never fall. It's the falling star that gets the attention. And everybody talks about all of these Christians who are falling and doing this or that. Somebody told me that one day. I said, "Name five." They couldn't do it. I can tell you I know that there are hypocrites in the church, but I'm going to tell you something else. I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God. And the best people I know on the face of God's green earth are members of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you let some hypocrite derail you, it must be that you've got problems with your own faith. Don't put your faith in a Judas. Put your faith in Jesus.

V. His Sympathizing Love

Now, the next thing I want you to see, the next facet of His wonderful character, where He outshines them all, is His sympathizing love. Look in verses 21 through 27: "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit—that is, He's brokenhearted—and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now, there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." Now, don't get the idea here that these are a couple of effeminate guys, and somebody snuggling Jesus. That's not what it's about at all. They're at supper. At supper, they would recline around the table. I've been in the Middle East, and sometimes we've done this where we would reenact this dinner, this supper. And there would be benches around the table, and they would lie down. And they would lie and prop themselves up on their left arm and eat with their right hand. So if I'm lying here, and then, Mark is lying here; he's at my bosom, at my chest. He's leaning there. That's what this is talking about. And so, look at it again now: "There was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved—of course, that was John who wrote this story, and he's being self-effacing here. He doesn't even mention his name. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him—that is, Simon said to John—that he should ask who it is of whom He spake. He, then, lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, It is he to whom I shall give a sop, and when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him." Now, he crosses a deadline at this point. Jesus is reaching out to him. When it says that "Satan entered into him," I believe he committed the unpardonable sin at this moment. "And, then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."

Now, I mention all of this to say that all of this is in the context of the great, steadfast love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Later on in this same chapter, we read in verses 34 and 35, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I

have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Now, the Scripture says that Jesus was troubled in spirit, in verse 21. Why was He troubled? He was heartbroken over Judas. Jesus did not hate Judas. He loved Judas. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” He had been loving Judas for three years, knowing all the while that Judas would betray Him. How do I know that Jesus loved him this way? Because nobody ever suspected that it was Judas. Nobody could see that Jesus was treating Judas any different. As a matter of fact, it seems that He is treating Judas even better. He’s the one who is given the prize morsel. But then, Judas makes his final decision. But it was Judas that opened the door to Satan. Jesus’ heart was broken.

Listen to me. A man will go to hell unsaved, but no man will go to hell unloved. Some people have the idea that God doesn’t love the whole world. I don’t have that idea. I believe He loves the whole world. And Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you.” That’s exactly what Jesus did to Judas.

VI. His Solemn Justice

The next thing I want you to see of these six facets of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ that outshines any person who ever lived, and that is His solemn justice, His justice. Yes, He is love, infinite love, matchless love, but He’s also the lion and the Lamb. He is the Savior and the Judge. Notice John 13, verse 27: “And after the sop Satan entered into him”—into Judas. “Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now, no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag—that is, he’s the treasurer—that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He, then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night.”

Why do you think John wrote that there? Because there’s a double meaning. He’s talking here about the darkness that is in Judas’ heart. Oh, it was literally dark, but there’s a double meaning here. Here was this man who has crossed the deadline. He’s damned for hell forever. And Jesus now is no longer reaching out to him. He says, “All right, all right, now you go.” Now, mercy has turned to judgment. Judas is determined to betray Christ. Satan has entered into him. And Judas is determined to betray Christ, and Christ is determined to die for sinners. Now, later on, Judas’ conscience will sting him, and Judas will go out and hang himself. And later on, people will cut down that

bloated body, swollen, skin-cracked, eyes picked out by the birds, flies on his extended tongue, stinking, rotting, and he'll be cut down, and fall to the rocks beneath, and split open like an overripe melon. The Bible said, his bowels gushed out

“Judas, where are your friends now? Judas, where are your thirty pieces of silver now? Judas, where are your plans now?” Jesus allowed that to happen. He said, “All right, Judas, what you do, do quickly.” Acts 1, verse 18: “Now, this man purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.” No wonder the Lord Jesus Christ said in another Gospel, in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 24: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for him that he had not been born”—good for him that he had not been born. God allowed him to be born, so that he might have a choice. Now, if it had been good for him not to have been born, because he had no choice, God should never have allowed him to be born. But he spurned love. God knew it. God knew what he would do. God incorporated that into His plan. It was all part of a marvelous mosaic. But the point is this: that Judas was never twice-born. So since he never had the second birth, he entered into the second death. And that's why I said this morning in my message, “The time will come, when, if you've not been born twice, you'll wish that you had never been born at all.” There is a God of justice. The Lord Jesus Christ is a God of infinite love, but of great justice.

Conclusion

All of these things I see in the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, I'm bad, but I'm no Judas.” Let me tell you something. Now, listen to me carefully. It is not the amount of sin that damns you; it is the fact of sin. More people drown in nine feet of water than drown in ninety feet of water. Even though you may not be a Judas, if you don't get saved, you'll spend eternity with Judas, because you're on the same side of the fence with him. That's the reason Jesus said, in Matthew 12:30: “He that is not with me is against me.” Question: Are you with Him? If not, you're against Him.

I want to tell you, if I had a thousand lives, I'd give them all to Jesus, because Jesus outshines them all. Amen.

Christlike Love

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 5, 2000

Main Scripture Text: John 13:34

*“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”*

JOHN 13:34

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Introduction

Find John chapter 13—the Gospel of John—and, in a moment, we’re going to look at verse 34. But I’ve already told you that the psychiatrist said that man’s greatest need is to be loved and to be able to show and to give love. And that is so true.

Now, we’re going to look right now at the last commandment that Jesus gave. Of all of His commandments, this is the last one that He gave before He ascended the high hills of glory—at least, before His rest, His trial and His crucifixion. He gave another commandment after that, and that was what we call the Great Commission.

But our world is starving for love. And this is what Jesus said here in John chapter 13, verse 34: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” We’re going to be talking today about “Christlike Love.” Now, Jesus has given us an example also of this love, so go back to the beginning of this chapter, and you’re going to find out that Jesus, the great teacher, gave a glorious and a wonderful example. And the example is the washing of His disciples’ feet. Chapter 13, verse 1: “Now, before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And, supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and, laid

aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Now, let's just stop right there, and let me talk to you a little bit about the custom in Bible times, and I think what a wonderful custom. In Bible times, people wore sandals. They didn't wear the kind of lace up shoes, primarily, that I'm wearing today, but they wore sandals, and they did not wear socks as we wear socks today, but the open sandals. And, of course, the roads were not paved as our roads are paved today with asphalt and concrete. And so, there was a lot of dust, and a lot of grit, and a lot of dirt. Now, if you were to come into a well-to-do house of that particular day, there would be a pot full of water, and a basin, and a little bench there, and, generally, there would be a servant. And, when you would come into the house, you would slip off your sandals, kind of let your toes do that a little bit, and then you would put your foot down into that basin of nice cool water, and a servant would get down there and wash your feet and then massage your feet like that. Can you feel that? Ooooh, that feels good. And wash your feet and then dry them with a towel. Can you do your toes like that, and go into the house. Just wonderful—a refreshment—just a wonderful touch!

Well, now, Jesus is there instituting what we call the Last Supper, this memorial feast, just before the Passover. And remember, Jesus, knowing that His hour has come, that He's going to be crucified, that Judas is going to betray Him, knowing all of this, when they came into that house there was no servant there to do that. And not a one of those others volunteered for that task, and so Jesus, He takes off His outer garment and He lays them aside. He takes a towel, ties it around His waist, fills the basin with water, and Jesus, Jesus, the Lord of Glory, knowing that He's come from God, that He's going to God, that the Father has committed all things into His hands, He takes the feet, the smelly feet of fisherman, tax collectors, and others of this motley crew that were His disciples, and Jesus washes their feet. And later on, He's going to say, "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Then He says, "As I have loved you, I'm going to give you a new commandment, that you love one another." What a wonderful, wonderful lesson on love.

Now, I want us to see four things about this kind of love, and I want you to check up and see if these four things are true in your heart and in your life.

I. Christlike Love Is Selfless Love

Number one: Christlike Love is Selfless Love—Christlike Love is Selfless Love. Now, so many of us are so rotten filled with ourselves. We are so preoccupied with ourselves. And go into any bookstore, and what are the books all about? Self-love, self-esteem, self-glory, self-fulfillment. I mean, our society is based on that, and yet we see the Lord

Jesus Christ humbling Himself and actually doing the labor of a slave or a servant. It is not without significance that verse 4 says, “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments...” Now, that is what He did actually, literally, physically, but it is symbolic of what He did when He stepped out of glory, when He laid aside the garments of glory that were His in heaven, and came down to this earth. Put in your margin Philippians 2, and verses 5 through 8. And here’s what the apostle Paul says about the Lord Jesus Christ and about us. He says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God—but now, listen to this—made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Now, don’t miss what Paul is saying here. He’s saying that Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Jesus is co-equal, co-eternal, co-essential with God the Father. Never forget that. That, friend, is basic Christianity. We sing the Doxology—Praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We serve one God who has revealed Himself to us in three persons. But Jesus stepped out of heaven, and He came from sovereignty to slavery. He humbled Himself. He became obedient. Satan, in contrast, as we preached last week, in his pride said, “I will ascend. I will be like the most high. I’m going up, up, up, up.” God said, “No, you’re going down, down, down, down, down. Jesus stepped out of the glory, humbled Himself, and the Bible says, “Therefore, God hath given Him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...”

Many of us fight for reputation. Jesus laid aside His reputation. We like to talk about how we came from nothing to something. Every now and then, you’ll have an evangelist who will come from place to place. Maybe God saved him in prison, and his message is, “From the Prison to the Pulpit.” Well, I’m glad for that, but how Jesus made something out of nothing. But Jesus came from something, and made Himself of no reputation. Now, the disciples of Jesus were not that way. Put in your margin Luke chapter 22, and look in verse 24. And this is the same night that all of this took place, the same evening now. Get the context. The same evening when Jesus is washing their feet, just before that there was a big dispute. Luke tells us about it—Luke 22, verse 24: “And there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” Can you imagine these rascals? “And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.” Now, Jesus never says, “Don’t be great.” Jesus says, “Just make sure that it’s real greatness that you get.” And real greatness is service. Here are these disciples, saying, “I’m better than you are. I’m bigger than you are. I

want to sit at His right hand. I want to sit at His left hand." Jesus said, "Forget that. Forget that. You're acting like pagans, the lords of the Gentiles. No! You want to be great? Then serve. Forget about yourself."

Now, let me say this. Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. I've said this so many times. People just say, "Well, you know, I'm just no good—I'm just no good." Cut that out. That's not humility; that's just poor posture. Now, physically, if you can't help it, that's one thing. But humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. Jesus, in the greatest act of humility, washed His disciples' feet, but was He thinking lowly of Himself? Read it: "Jesus, knowing...that he was come from God, and going to God, and that the Father had committed all things into His hands..." Do you think He's thinking lowly of Himself? No. Get the context. Knowing all of that—knowing that, knowing who He was—then laid aside His garments, took a towel, and washed His disciples' feet. That, my friend, is humility. "Well," you say, "what does that have to do with me?" Friend, you're somebody. You have been born of God. And, if you're been born of God, you're going to God also. I mean, you're somebody. Now, you can be a servant. Now, you can lay aside your pride. Real love is selfless love.

Now, the Bible says, in Romans chapter 12 and verse 3: "For I say, through the grace given unto me..."—and wasn't that a beautiful song we heard about grace today?—"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think—that's what Satan tried to do—but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith." Just say, "I am what I am by the grace of God." The grace of God exalts a man without inflating him, and it humbles a man without debasing him. And we don't live in sinful exaggeration or false humiliation, but in sober estimation. I am what I am by the grace of God. And, therefore, now I am free to serve you.

We had a staff meeting, a staff retreat, last week, and I told the staff what I want to tell you, thinking about who you are, and who God is. And it helps us to get together, and to love one another, as we ought to love one another. Let me give you some words.

First of all is the word grace. Do you know what grace is? Grace is God's acceptance of me. God just accepts me, not because of my goodness—no! "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Thank God. The Bible says, in Ephesians 1, "he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." So God accepts me. That is what? Say grace—grace. All right—grace.

Now, here's the next thing. God accepts me—that is grace. Faith, the next step, is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. That's what faith is. Faith just accepts the fact that God accepts me. Say faith—faith. All right. Grace. Faith. Grace—God accepts me; faith—I accept that God accepts me. Now, if God accepts me, what am I to do? I am to accept me. That is peace—peace. Say peace. All right. Grace, Faith, Peace.

When I see the grace of God, and I put my faith in the grace of God, for the first time the peace of God comes into my heart. I have to stop trying. I start trusting. And then, that wonderful, glorious peace like a river comes into me. That is peace because now I accept me.

Have you ever accepted you? Most of us have never really accepted ourselves. We're still struggling, trying to make ourselves acceptable. You can't do it. Just accept the fact by faith that God has accepted you, and be at peace, my brother and my sister. That is peace. You accept you.

I hear people say you're not supposed to love yourself. No, that's wrong. You're to love yourself, not love your faults. I'm not talking about egotism. May I ask you a question? Does God love you? Does He? Is it all right for you to love what God loves? Now, do you love me? Say yes. All right now, what does the Bible say? We are to love one another as we love ourselves. Now, if you don't love you, you can't love me—see? We're to love one another as we love ourselves. Now, how do we love ourselves? Well, we just understand we are what we are by the grace of God. We have been born of God. We're going to God. Yes, we have that peace.

Now, first of all, grace, then faith, then peace. Now, I accept me. Now, for the first time, I'm free to accept you. That's love. Grace, faith, peace, love. You see, I accept you now. You know why I can accept you and you can accept me? I don't have to lord it over you. I don't have to put you down. I don't have to strut in front of you. I don't have to brag in order to build myself up. I know who I am in Jesus Christ. I've been born of God, and I'm going to God. I know who I am. Therefore, I don't have to get in, ego against ego, strutting, trying to be the greatest, whomever. No. I can show love to you, and I'll never run out of that love, because the more love I give you, the more love He gives me, and it just flows through me and flows through you. That's love.

Now, notice: grace—God's acceptance of me; faith—my acceptance of God's acceptance of me; peace—now I accept me; love—now I accept you. And now, for the first time, you're free to accept me because I'm not the person I used to be before I experienced this, and that's fellowship. That's what God wants. Grace, faith, peace, love, fellowship, as we learn to love one another.

And so, what is real love? What is Christlike love? It is selfless love—selfless love—not being all concerned about number one. And selfless love is real humility. May I tell you that unbounded love and pride can never dwell in the same heart. Only in pure humility can there be genuine love. All right. Got it? Say, got it. All right.

II. Christlike Love Is Steadfast Love

Now, not only is Christlike love selfless love, but Christlike love is steadfast love. Look in verse 1 of this chapter: "Now, before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that

his hour was come that he should depart out of this world..."—now, what that means is he knows that the clock is ticking and the crucifixion is near—"Now, before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father—watch this—having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He didn't stop loving them. He just kept on loving them. And may I tell you that if you examine the lives of these people, they were not all that lovely at that time. Peter's going to curse and swear and deny Him. James and John are talking about who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom. And they were filled with fear and all of these things, but He just kept on loving them.

Now, many times. we excuse ourselves—I've done this and you have too—we excuse ourselves when we're irritable, if we're what? Tired. Worn out. Had a hard day. People have mistreated us. And we bark at people, and we snap at people, and we say, "After all, if you knew what I've been through, you'd understand that." Oh, listen. Jesus, facing the cross, is showing love. Jesus, knowing that the hour is coming that they're going to crucify Him, still He is steadfastly loving them. Now, if your so-called love cannot stand the test of excruciating time, you don't have real love at all. If you just love when the times are good, any pagan can do that—any pagan can do that. What Jesus is doing is loving under extreme pressure. This is love under pressure. Many of us—have you ever just erupted at somebody? Grrrrr. And then you just say, "Well, I'm sorry. I've just been under so much pressure. Just forgive me."

If you want to know what you're full of, just see what spills out when you get jostled. That's what you're full of. Now, if, when you get jostled, all that stuff comes out, you're just full of all that stuff. But if you get jostled and love comes out, then you're full of love. Now, what am I saying? That Jesus, in the midst of extreme duress, extreme pressure, knowing that, that He's about to be crucified, is steadfastly loving His disciples. Real love, Christian love, loves steadfastly. It loves unto the end.

All of us have had friends. We call them fair weather friends, like passengers on a ship. When everything is smooth, they're on board with us, but you let the water get rough, and they bale out. Real love will never let us go—never let us go.

One man had a son that was breaking his heart. He had almost bankrupted himself, trying to reclaim the boy. He had counseled with the boy. He had had the boy to counselors. He had soaked the boy in prayer. He had not only gone the second mile, the third mile, the fourth mile. The boy had disgraced the father, broken the mother's heart. This dad had done all that he could do to reclaim his son. He was talking with a friend about it, and the friend said, "I'll tell you what I would do with him, if he were my son." And the father said, "Yes, you're right. If he were your son, that's what I'd do too, but he's not your son. He's my son, and I can't let him go." I love that. "He's my son." I'll tell you, no matter what you do—listen to me, listen to me—I don't care what you do, He

will never let you go. “Having loved his own, he loved them *eis otose*—that means all the way—to the end.” Oh love that will not let me go.

What can separate us from the love of Christ? “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.” You are loved, my friend. You know what the devil tells some of you, and he’s telling some of you right now? You’ve messed up. You’ve blown it. God doesn’t love you anymore. You’ve had it. That’s a lie out of hell. He does love you. There’s nothing you can do to make Him love you any more, and nothing you can do will make Him love you any less. He doesn’t love us because we’re lovely; He loves us because of His grace. “And having loved his own, he loved them unto the end.”

What is Christlike love? It is selfless love. He laid aside His garments. It is steadfast love. He loved them unto the end. Thank God for that.

III. Christlike Love Is Serving Love

Number three: Christlike love is serving love. You know what the apostle John said? He said, “Let’s not just love in word, but in deed and in truth.” Look in verses 4 and 5 of this same chapter? “He—Jesus—riseth from supper, laid aside his garments, took a towel, and girded himself. And after that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” Did you know that real love knows no job that is so lowly to do? Do you know the feet that He washed, do you know who was in that crowd? Judas was there. Jesus, knowing soon that Judas is going to betray Him with a kiss of infamy, a kiss that would burn like a coal from hell on His cheeks, Jesus washed Judas’ feet. You see, didn’t Jesus say, “Bless them that persecute you; do good to them that despitefully use you?” You see, Jesus didn’t practice what He preached; He preached what He practiced. I mean, Jesus is serving.

Now, let me give you a definition of love. Love is not giving to someone else what they deserve; love is giving to someone what they need. That’s what real love does. Real love doesn’t give us what we deserve, but what we need.

A well-known preacher went into an airport. I may have told you this before. He sat down in the restaurant in the airport. It was early in the morning and he wanted breakfast. The waitress came out and she was kind of sassy. Have you ever had kind of a sassy waitress? She said, “What do you want?” He said, “Well, I’d like some breakfast.” She said, “Do you want a menu?” He said, “Yes, ma’am.” “Do you want some coffee?” “Yes, ma’am.” “Would you like some orange juice?” “Yes, ma’am.” She said, “Yes, ma’am; yes, ma’am; yes, ma’am. Is that all you can say—yes, ma’am?” He said, “Yes, ma’am.” So he gave the order. She went back into the kitchen, came out

again with his ugly look on her face, slapped the food down there, and said, “Do you want anything else?” He said, “No, ma’am. That’s fine. Thank you, ma’am.” She turned and went away. He ate his breakfast, filled out the check, left, as I remember the story, a \$20 bill on the table. He turned and started to walk out. She said, “Hey, you. You left some money on the table.” He said, “Well, don’t they tip around here?” She said, “Wait a minute. You left a \$20 tip for me the way I treated you?” He said, “Yes, ma’am.” She said, “Why would you do that?” He said, “I was watching you. I could tell you were hurt. I could tell you had some real problem. I could tell that things were bothering you. You must have some problem, and I just thought I would show you some love.” She began to cry. She said, “You don’t know the problems I have.” She said, “I left a child today sick. Coming to work, my old rattletrap car broke down. The boss got all over me for being late. Yes, I’ve had some problems.” He said, “Well, I thought maybe so. I thought maybe this would cheer you up.” It wasn’t very long until he led her to Christ right there in that restaurant, and she got saved. Do you know what that is? That’s Christlike love. That is not giving her what she deserved; it was giving her what she needed—and what she needed right then was love.

What did these disciples deserve? They didn’t deserve to have their feet washed. They needed a kick in the pants, in human terms. But Jesus knew the love that these needed. And so, Christlike love is serving love. And, you know, if the members of our church all had Christlike love, we wouldn’t have to beg for people to work in the nursery. We wouldn’t have to beg for people to work on the parking lot. We wouldn’t have to beg for people to work in Vacation Bible School, or to sing in the choir. You see, that’s Christlike love. It is serving love. First John 3, verse 18: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” When you have Christlike love, there is no job too small for you to do. Jesus, the Lord of Glory, is serving, washing dirty feet.

IV. Christlike Love is Sanctifying Love

Now, let me give you the fourth mark of Christlike love. We said that it is selfless. We’ve said that it is steadfast. We’ve said that it is serving. Christlike love is also sanctifying love. Christlike love is sanctifying love. Now, I’m going to begin to read here in verse 6, and I’m going to read right on through verse 15, because I don’t want you to miss the trend here because there’s a change that’s happening here; there’s a transition.

Jesus is now moving from the physical to the spiritual, and from the literal to the symbolic. “Then cometh he to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” I feel like saying, “Peter, you’d better let him; you’re about to put it in your mouth.” “Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now—that is, He’s going now beyond the literal—but thou shalt

know hereafter.” “Peter, later on, you’re going to understand the deeper meaning of all of this.” “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” “Oh,” Peter says, “all right. If it’s that important.” “Peter saith unto him, Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” “If it’s all that important, Lord, don’t just stop with the feet.” Verse 10: “Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save—or except—to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and you are clean, but not all.” Now, I’m going to come back to that in a moment. That’s a very important verse. “For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.” He’s talking about all of them as individuals. They were not all saved. He knew that Judas was unclean, that Judas had never been saved. “So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you.”

Now, this is the last point and the final point and the sanctifying thing. Christ’s love is sanctifying love. Jesus now is turning the conversation to symbolism. No longer is He talking about literal dirt; He’s talking about spiritual defilement that comes into lives, because all of us get contaminated by sin. All of us get our spiritual feet dirty, because we live in a dirty, grimy, and dusty world. Now, Jesus is saying, “Peter, I need to wash your feet,” and Peter says, “Well, no, You can’t wash my feet.” Jesus said, “Now, if I don’t wash your feet, I have no part with you.” That means I can’t fellowship with you. Then Peter says, “Well, wash me all over.” He said, “You don’t need to be washed all over; you just need your feet washed.”

Now, what is all of this a lesson about? Well, salvation is called the washing of regeneration. When we get saved, we spiritually were bathed and cleansed from the defilement of this world, but we still live in this world and we still get our feet dirty. Is there anybody here who hasn’t sinned after you’ve gotten saved? No one. Even though we’ve been saved, even though He has washed us and made us whiter than snow, we still walk in an old, dirty world, and we need to come and get our feet washed. That is, day by day, we need to kind of get our spiritual feet washed. Right? Got it?

Now, Peter, when he saw this, he said, “Well, wash me all over.” Jesus said, “No, you’ve already had a bath. You’ve already had a bath, and you’re clean. You just need to have your feet washed.” What is the lesson there? The lesson is very simple, very plain, and very clear. Once you get saved, that’s it, but you have to keep getting your feet washed. You see, once you had the bath, that’s settled. Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find anywhere where anybody was ever saved twice. You can’t find it—you can’t find it. “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

When we are saved, it is once and for all, but we still need to get our feet washed, because we need to come to Him for daily cleansing and daily foot washing. So, what He's talking about now is not some sort of a ceremony. When He says, "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Some churches have this as a ceremony. They have some Baptist churches called Foot-washing Baptist churches. I mean, in the service, like they have baptism, and they have the Lord's Supper, they have foot-washing service. I don't make fun of that. I think it's very beautiful. But that's not what Jesus is doing. Jesus is not giving us a new church ordinance, like we all come to church some day and wash one another's feet. No, it's much more practical than that and much more spiritual than that. He's not setting up a new ordinance. Humility is not humility when it's put on show—I mean, when we all wash our feet—because we're going to have foot-washing today and come to church. I'm not really putting that down, but you have to go beyond this. What is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying, "Peter, you are going to get your feet dirty. In a little while, you're going to betray me. But, Peter, I'm going to wash your feet. Peter, I am going to forgive you." And Jesus did. Remember that episode after the resurrection? "Simon, do you love me?" "Well, Lord, You know all things. I know you love me. You know I love you." "Now, Simon, do you love me more than these?" "Well, Lord, You know all things." "Peter, do you love me?" Three times Jesus asked that question. Why? Because three times Peter had denied Him. What is Jesus doing now? He's washing the feet of Simon Peter. At that day, Jesus said, "Peter, you don't understand, but you will understand later on." I'll guarantee you that day on the seashore he understood what Jesus was talking about when he had his feet washed. I was saved as a teenage boy, but so many times—thank God, hallelujah—He's washed my feet, and He's never stopped loving me, and He'll never stop loving you.

Now, I've got to get to the end of this message, but let me ask you a question. Suppose, right now, in this building that door up there were to open, and in would walk Jesus Christ in bodily form, and He has a towel and He has a basin, and He were to come to you this morning, get right in front of you, and say—now, this is Jesus, not Adrian now, but Jesus—saying, "May I wash your feet," how would you feel? You wouldn't say, "Oh, Lord, You can never wash my feet." And He'll say, "Well, if I don't wash your feet, I can't have any fellowship with you." And with scalding tears coming down your cheeks, you would let Jesus wash your feet. Can you imagine Him washing your feet? Just imagine that. And with tears of gratitude and love, you'd let Him do it. But now, suppose, He were to hand you the basin, and say, "Will you wash My feet," what would you say? "Oh, Lord, yes; gladly, Lord, I could wash Your feet. Lord, yes, yes, I'd wash Your feet; yes, I would." Well, all pretence aside, Jesus Christ is here today, not in bodily form, but where two or three are gathered in His name, He's here,

isn't He? I want to tell anybody here today He wants to wash your feet.

But, now, the second question. Will you wash His feet? You say, "Well, it can't be done because He's not here physically." Now, here's the point. Now, listen to me carefully. Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you've done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me." Do you understand that? When you wash my feet, you're washing the feet of Jesus, because I am the body of Christ. I'm going to fail you. You're going to fail me, just as those disciples failed Jesus. And what is our ministry? "Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ sake, hath forgiven you."

Do you know somebody who needs their feet washed, somebody who's done you wrong? They haven't done you as wrong as the disciples had done Jesus wrong. Peter was going to curse and swear and deny Him, and yet Jesus washed Peter's feet. And I'm telling you that the church will be a wonderful place when we allow Jesus to wash our feet and to keep us clean day by day, and when we, with Christlike love, wash one another's feet. Is there somebody you know whose feet need to be washed today? Would you humble yourself?

Last week, we talked about pride. Let me tell you something about foot-washing. You can't wash feet without humility. There's one thing that's impossible to do, and that's to look down on somebody while you're washing their feet. You just can't do it. You can't look down on a person while you are washing their feet. Jesus laid aside His garments. Let's lay aside our pride and our position. Jesus never laid aside His deity and His glory, but He washed His disciples' feet. I'm so glad for that.

Conclusion

It feels so good to have your feet washed and toes just like that. And, friend, it is so good when you say, "I'm clean. Jesus, thank You." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Then we can go in and have fellowship with Him at the table. Amen? And there are people who need your love. They need it greatly. They need selfless love, steadfast love, serving love, and sanctifying love. That's Christlike love. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you."

May our church—may our church, this church—just be a colony of heaven, saturated with the love of Jesus Christ.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. This kind of love is supernatural love. It is not natural love; it is supernatural love. Oh, yes it is. The Bible says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." You cannot love this way by sheer human will and determination. It's supernatural. You've got to let the love of God come into you so you can give it to others. That's the grace we were

talking about. He accepts us and we accept that He accepts us. Now, if you've never been saved, let me tell you God loves you too. Oh, He loves you, and He invites you today to have every sin forgiven. He'll give you a bath all over. Yes, He will. You'll be bathed, cleansed by the washing of regeneration. From there on, He'll just wash your feet every day, if you'll let Him. If you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: "Dear God. I am a sinner, and I'm lost, and 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, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my life. Forgive my sins. Save me, Jesus." Ask Him, almost like a child, "Save me, Jesus." And then, by faith, pray this way: "Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You're my Lord, my Savior, and my God. And, Lord Jesus, I give You my life now, and I will live my life for You the rest of my days, because You have died for me. Thank You for saving me. In Your name I pray. Amen."

How to Love as Jesus Loved

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 10, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 13:34

*"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."*

JOHN 13:34

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Introduction

I want you to take God's Word and turn to John chapter thirteen if you would. And I want you to look at a key passage of Scripture. John chapter thirteen, verse thirty-four: "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you that ye also love one another." Today I want to talk to you on this subject, "How to Love as Jesus Loved".

I want you before I begin the message to think of someone in your heart and in your mind. Someone who has done you wrong, someone who has disappointed you, perhaps someone who has failed you, perhaps someone who has abused or misused you, perhaps someone who has betrayed you. If you will think, you can think of that person. All persons. It may be a son or a daughter. It may be a brother or a sister. It may be a father or a mother, maybe your boss. It may be your neighbor. It may be somebody in the church. But somebody who has failed you, misused you, abused you, harmed you, disappointed you, or maybe betrayed you.

Do you have that person in mind? You say, I can't think of anyone. You're a rare individual. Maybe you're just kidding yourself. Do you have that person in mind? I want to talk to you today about how to deal with that individual, how to love as Jesus loved. What I read to you in John chapter thirteen, verse thirty-four, is the last commandment that Jesus Christ gave before His arrest, before His trial, and before His crucifixion. He called it a new commandment.

Well, why is it a new commandment? Love is not new. The Old Testament taught us to love. What is new about this is this. The new part is Jesus said, you're to love as I have loved you. Never before has this world known love like the love that Jesus Christ showed and the love that Jesus Christ gave. And that is what made it radically new. Now, not only did Jesus Christ give the commandment, but Jesus Christ, through His life, demonstrated the commandment. You are to love one another as I have loved you.

A well-known psychiatrist recently said that the greatest need, the greatest need—listen—the greatest need of mankind is to love and to be loved. Think about that. The greatest need that mankind has is to love and to be loved. Many years ago, there was a song that said, it's love that makes the world go round. Well, we know that's not true; but someone else has said; it sure does make the trip worthwhile.

Love. True love. And yet we live in a generation that love is passing us by so quickly. It's getting harder to love today than ever before. As a matter of fact the Bible says, in the last days, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Abounding lawlessness, abating love. Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.

What does that mean? People today are frightened. Lawlessness—the word iniquity means lawlessness. And lawlessness abounds. On our streets of our city of Memphis, people are being shot down in cold blood and senselessly killed, killed for nothing. There is murder and rape and arson, and pillage, and hatred, and brutality on every hand. And what does that cause people to do? It causes us to be suspicious, doesn't it? It causes us to retreat. It causes the men to say to the wives, do not open the door no matter who knocks on it unless you know who they are. It says if a person stops by the side of the road and they look like they are in trouble, be very, very careful before you stop to help them. If somebody comes and says, will you show me the way to a certain place to a boy and girl, we say, don't go with them. Don't. Don't help; don't get involved. Keep your doors shut. Don't become a part of this situation, or that situation. We tend to what? Withdraw. We stop loving, why? Because lawlessness—iniquity—abounds. And the love of many waxes cold, and we are frightened, and intimidated, and afraid to love. And especially we have no desire to love those who are so lost, those who are wicked, those who are so vile. Yet, just before His arrest and crucifixion, again, Jesus Christ gave a commandment that He called a new commandment.

You are to love one another as I have loved you. And that person that I asked you to think about is the person I want to tell you how to love today. You're to love that person as Jesus Christ loved. It's going to be extremely hard. And it may not be somebody that has done you violently wrong. It may be the person maybe that you're married to, maybe one of your children. A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another even as I have loved you. Now, Jesus, the great teacher, was the great

example-giver. And so, you're in John chapter thirteen, and I want you to see the context in which the Lord Jesus Christ gave this commandment. John chapter thirteen—go back now, if you will, in verse one: "And now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own"—here's the love that He was talking about in verse thirty four—"...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil, having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God, he riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself and after that he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Now, I think most of us who have been studying the Bible for a while, know something of the background of this example. Foot washing was a custom in Bible times. And in every home, especially the homes of the rich, there would be a basin by the door. And when you would come in for a dinner or a visit or whatever, if it were a wealthy home, that home had domestic help; it had a servant. When you came to the door, you would slip your feet out of your shoes, out of your sandals. And there was no pavement that day, or very little pavement—just dusty roads. Your feet would be dusty, even if you had bathed before you had gone out to dinner. You would slip your feet out of your sandals, and there would be a slave there. The mark of a slave was that he would wear an apron girded about him, called a towel, like a towel, and he would kneel down, take your sandals, and there would be a basin of refreshing water. And he would put your foot into that water, and then with His hands, he would wash your feet, wash all the dust off, and then massage your feet. That feels good, doesn't it? I mean, just to think about it, feels good. He would massage your feet maybe with sweet ointment or perfume or something.

And then with your toes just tingling and feeling so cool and refreshed, you would go in and sit down at the table. It was just a custom. And I think, perhaps, a custom that ought to come back to this day and age in which we live. It would cleanse, it would refresh, it would relax; and rather than smelly feet everywhere, there was a wonderful aroma in the room. So that was the custom.

Now, Jesus is with His disciples, and nobody else seems to be doing this. And so, the Bible says that Jesus girds himself—He lays aside His garment, He puts on the slave's garment—the towel, girds himself with a towel. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begins to do slave labor. And He washes the feet, the smelly feet of fisherman. Jesus does that.

And then later on He says, I have given you a new commandment, that as I have

loved you, you are to love one another. And I remind you that among those whose feet Jesus washed, was Judas, the one who would betray Him to death, and plant that slimy kiss upon the sacred brow or the cheek of our Lord Jesus Christ, a kiss that would burn like a cold from hell. And yet, Jesus washed Judas feet. Jesus washed the feet of Simon Peter, the big fisherman. And Jesus, knowing that Simon Peter would betray Him and deny Him, washed his feet. Washed the feet of Thomas, the doubter. He just simply washed all of their feet.

I want to tell you how to love as Jesus loved. What kind of love was His love?

I. Jesus' Love Was a Selfless Love

First of all, I want you to consider that His love was a very selfless love. Now, notice what it says here in verse three. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands—that is, He's the master of the universe; He rules over everything, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand. That He was come from God, and that He was going to God. He knew His heavenly origin; He knew His heavenly destination. He knew His authority, His power; He knew it all.

See the contrast here—it was this one who washed the disciples feet. What a contrast to the way that the disciples had been that same evening. Now, you don't find it here in John chapter thirteen. But in Luke chapter twenty-two, let me tell you what is happened that same night. In Luke chapter twenty-two, listen to it: And there was also a strife among them—that is, among the disciples. Who should be accounted to grace? They were saying, I'm greater than you are. No, I'm greater than you are. I'm more important than you are. No, I'm more important than you are.

Now, Jesus hears them bickering about who's gonna be the greatest. And He said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them. They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so. But He that is the greatest among you, let him be as the younger. And He that is chief has him that doeth serve.

Here was the love of the Lord Jesus Christ illustrating all of this. The Lord of glory, He's doing slave labor. Look in verse four. The Bible says He laid aside His garment. He is not preoccupied with himself. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus, when He came from heaven laying aside His glory. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus self-emptying. Put this verse in your margin. Philippines two, verses five and following: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." That is, it literally means the thing to be grasped. He didn't have to reach out to be equal with God. As Satan said, I will be like the most high. Jesus never had to say that, because He is like the most high. Thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation. He laid aside His robe of glory. He made

himself of no reputation. And took upon Him the form of a servant.

Now do you see what is illustrated here when Jesus laid aside the garment and took the towel, the form of a servant? He's just acting this all out. He's just demonstrating all of this. He made himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ washed His disciples' feet on the way to the cross.

Now, who was this that was washing the disciples' feet that night? It was the one who had come from God, who was going to God. That was the one who laid aside His garment and took the slave garment. It was the one who had come from sovereignty to slavery.

You see, the devil became the devil by saying, I will ascend. Jesus is our Lord because He said, I will descend. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He laid aside His rights, but He never set aside His deity. And the Bible says, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. When a man ever says, I know my rights, you can be certain he is walking a far away from the Lord—if he's talking about His earthly rights. Jesus laid all of that aside, and Jesus took the form of a servant. The Bible says, He made himself of no reputation.

Do you know what most of us are do doing? We are fighting for our reputation. And we talk about how we went from nothing to something. How many evangelists are there who cross America who have a testimony something like this: from the prison to the pulpit; how I went from ignominious shame to where I am today? The Lord Jesus didn't talk about how He had gone from lowliness to highness. As a matter of fact, our Lord had come from highness to lowliness.

And may I tell you what humility is? The great need in America today is humility. What is humility? May I show you what humility is? It's easier to show than it is to describe. Look again in verses three and four: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that He was come from God and went to God, He riseth from supper, laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself." Now, that is a picture of humility. You see, real humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. If you were to stand before me and just say, oh, I'm no good; I am worthless; I don't have any talent; I don't have any ability, you might think you're being humble, but I think you're full of rotten pride.

I think I've used this illustration before. Margaret Lafferty, who plays our piano, if I were to say to Margaret, Margaret, that was beautiful. Oh, no, no, no, I can't play the piano. I am not good at the piano. No, no, no, no, no, no. I'm just a just a terrible pianist. Well, it'd be a lie, wouldn't it? She's a great pianist. She has every right to know that she is, because she is.

Humility is not going around saying, I'm not this; I'm not that. Jesus knew that He came from God. Jesus knew that He was going to God. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things into His hands. That was the man that washed His disciples' feet. Friend, that is humility. That is humility. You see, Real humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it is not thinking of yourself. That is humility. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ did.

Self-acceptance is not pride. Self-acceptance is the cure for pride. So many times, when we say, oh, I'm no good, we're wanting somebody else to say, oh, yes, you are. That's what—we're just setting ourselves up for a double compliment, you know? Jesus knew who He was. But Jesus, knowing that He came from God, and was going to God, was willing to serve. And, my dear friend, what was true of Jesus in a very real sense is true of you.

Now, while Jesus came from God, I am born of God, and I am going to God. You're not looking at a piece of junk up here; you're looking at a piece of redeemed humanity. So are you. And so are you. I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I have come from God because I am a creature created in the image of God, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, and I am going to God. And you're looking at a man who will spend all eternity with the Father.

The Bible never tells us to go running ourselves down. To the contrary. Romans chapter twelve and verse three, the apostle Paul says, for I say by the grace given unto me—and I love that—by through the grace given unto me. And that grace has been given to us. I say by the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. That's what the devil tried to do. But, to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith.

What does that mean? The grace of God exalts a man, without inflating him, and it humbles a man, without defacing him. That's what the grace of God does. It's a warning. I am what I am, by the grace of God—that's what Paul said. He didn't say, I am not what I am, by the grace of God. I am what I am, by the grace of God. Jesus, knowing that He came from God; Jesus, knowing that He was going to God; Jesus, knowing that the Father had put everything into His hands—that was the one who laid aside His garments—took a towel and washed fishermen's feet. That's so important.

You see, that's true humility. And that is true love. Pride, on the other hand, drives wedges; humility always builds bridges of love. And, if you're to love as Jesus loves, your love is to be a selfless love.

Some years ago, I walked through about five steps with you, and I want to walk through them with you right now, and tell you how to build bridges between other people. Remember, pride drives wedges; love builds bridges. Here are the five steps.

Number one, God accepts me. We call that grace. Have you got it? Grace. What is grace? Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. God accepts me. The Bible says, in

Ephesians chapter one, I am accepted in the beloved. God accepts me. Not because I'm sinless, not because I'm good, not because I'm worthy, but because He loves us. God accepts me. I'm a recipient of God's acceptance. That's grace.

Secondly, I accept that God accepts me. God accepts me. He did that on the cross when Christ died for me. I accept that God accepts me. That's grace. God accepts me—that's grace. I accept that God accepts me—that's faith. Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. Do you get it? Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. I loved him because He first loved me. Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me.

So, what do you have? Grace. God accepts me. Secondly, faith. I accept that God accepts me. Thirdly, peace. Now, I accept me. Now, I accept me. If God accepts me, then I accept me. Have you ever accepted you? Have you ever really accepted you? Just come to be at peace with yourself? You see, not only do you have peace with God, but you have the peace of God. Accept yourself.

Is it all right to love you? Of course it is. God loves you. Can't you love what God loves? You say, I've always been told you're not supposed to love yourself. Well, where'd you ever get that? The Bible teaches you that you're to love me as you love yourself. And, if you don't love yourself, how can you love me? As a matter of fact, if you don't love yourself, how can you love me? As a matter of fact, if you don't love yourself, you're dangerous. And there are a lot of people who are dangerous, because they do not love themselves. Their life is meaningless. And the reason they waste other people's lives, they don't know the value of love; they don't know the value of their life.

Grace. God accepts me. Faith, I accept that God accepts me. Peace, I accept me, because I've accepted that God has accepted me. I begin to love myself. I don't mean selfish love. That's not true love anyway. I don't mean you're standing in front of the mirror and singing, how great thou art. Do that, you're sick. Not talking about that. I am talking about that you love what God loves, and God loves you. When you do that, that's peace.

Now, next, because I have accepted me, I can accept you. I can accept you. Why? Because I know that God loves me. I don't have to use you, abuse you, mishandle you, manipulate you, twist you, lie to you, con you, deceive you, lord it over you, put you down, impress you. Why? I know who I am. I know that I have come from God. I know that I am going to God. I know who I am. Therefore, I can accept you. I don't have to manipulate you. I don't have to one-up you all the time. I'm at rest. And so now, I can love you just as Jesus loved these disciples, knowing that He has come from God and is going to God.

Grace, faith, peace, love. Grace, God accepts me. Faith, I accept that He accepts me. Peace, I accept me. Love, I accept you. Last, fellowship. Now, you're free to accept

me. For the first time, I've become something that is, rather than being a wedge driver, I've become a bridge builder. And that's koinonia. The Bible word koinonia, sharing the same life. Our fellowship, just put it that way. So, what do you have? Here it is. Grace, faith, peace, love, fellowship.

Jesus accepted who He was; He knew who He was. Jesus did not think lowly of himself. He just didn't think of himself. Not that Jesus didn't love himself; He did love himself. And He loved you. And you can love what God loves. I'm not talking about a selfish love, but a selfless love. There's nothing so empty as a self-centered life. But there is nothing so centered as a self-emptied life.

Jesus, knowing that He came from God, that He was going to God, took a towel, and girded himself. He just humbled himself, so it is selfless love.

II. Jesus' Love Was a Steadfast Love

Second thing. His love was not only a selfless love; it was a steadfast love. Look in verse one. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that He should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them to the end. The Greek word is telos—to the end. It means, He just kept on loving to the consummation. He never stops loving. I remind you that Jesus washed His disciples feet on the way to the cross.

We love sometimes, but we love when everything is just right. But, when we get under pressure, we say, stay out of my way; I'm in a bad mood today. God's given me some tribulation, and I'm gonna tribulate. And we excuse ourselves. Well, friend, if everything is going right, so what? Even the pagans can love that way. Your character that cannot stand up under pressure and under testing is not real. Unsaved people can love when everything is lovely. If you want to know what you're full of, and we've often said it, just see what spills out when you get jostled. His love was an unconditional love. He loved them to the end.

You want to know who your real friends are? Make a mistake. These disciples were bundles of mistakes—misunderstanding, failure, disappointment. He kept on loving them. We all have friends who get on board when the ship is sailing smoothly and the wind is blowing. But you let the ship get in rough water, rough sailing, they abandon ship. There are others, though, like the Lord Jesus, who will stay on board.

It is steadfast love. He loves unto the end. He will never stop loving you, friend. And if you want to love as Jesus loves, you'll never stop loving. There was a boy who had abused his parents, misused his parents, absolutely ruined his parents. And the father kept on loving and loving and loving and loving that boy. Finally, somebody said to that father, I'll tell you what, tell you what I'd do with that boy if he were my boy. And he gave some advice. And the sum total of that advice was just to forget him. And do you know

what that father said? He said, I agree with you. I would do the same thing, if he were your boy. But he's not your boy; he's my boy. He's my son. And my love will follow him to the end. That's really the love of the Lord Jesus. Even greater, when my father and my mother cast me off, then will the Lord take me up.

III. Jesus' Love Was a Serving Love

That love is selfless love; it is steadfast love. And I want to show you one other thing: it is serving love. Now, the Lord Jesus—look in verses four and five—He riseth from supper, laid aside his garments, took a towel, and girded himself, and after that, he poureth water in a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Now, our Lord doesn't just love in word only, but in deed and in truth. Love knows no job that's too lowly to do. Jesus washed even the feet of Judas. He met the greatest injury with service. And only love can do that. Jesus taught us to do good to those that despitefully use us. Didn't He teach that? Jesus did not practice what He preached; He preached what He practiced. Jesus did that kind of love.

Love does not give people what they deserve; love gives people what they need. And love is willing to serve at the lowest of tasks. You may feel that there's some service beneath you. Some of you businessmen may think that you're too big a shot to change diapers. You can't see yourself doing that, can you? Maybe you could teach a big Bible class somewhere. Friend, let me tell you something. There is no task too menial for love to do—the work in the kitchen; the work in the nursery; to sort papers; to do whatever needs to be done.

What motivates people to do that? Selfless love, steadfast love, and serving love. And here is the Lord of Glory, knowing that He came from God, and went to God. The one who made the universes that scooped out the seas—He put the mountains, flung out the sun, moon, and the stars—that one is washing feet—fishermen's feet.

First John 3:18: My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. If we had more of that kind of love, we'd have more jobs being fulfilled around here and less people who think they do God a wild service when they come to church on Sunday morning. Think they are doing God a great favor. To come sit, soak, and sour. But God says you're to serve. And there are people who need servants.

Very quickly, one other mark of Jesus love in this passage. You remember what I said? It was selfless love. We said, dear friend, that this love is steadfast love to the end. We said it is serving love. But one other thing: It is sanctifying love. Look in verse six: Then cometh he to Simon Peter. Now, He is washing feet. And Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, thou shalt never

wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. I feel like saying, Peter, you'd better let him wash your foot; you're about to put it in your mouth. You'll never wash my feet. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every with. And you're clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him, therefore said he, you're not all clean.

What is the lesson here? Jesus is talking more than about physical birth now, when He says, you're clean, but not all of you. He knew that Judas was going to betray Him. Judas had never had a spiritual bath. He's not talking here about physical dirt, but spiritual defilement. And what He says to Peter, Peter, you've already had a bath. I don't need to wash your head. I don't need to wash your hands—just your feet. You're already saved. But you walk in a dirty world. And because you walk in a dirty world, your spiritual feet get defiled. And you need your spiritual feet washed. You don't need a bath all over. You've already been saved.

Now, of course, Judas, he's never been saved. He's not clean at all. He's never had a bath. You've had a bath. You're saved. You're my child. But your feet still get dirty. What a wonderful teacher was the Lord Jesus. And Jesus is saying, now look. My love is sanctifying love. I am willing to forgive you. Peter said, I don't understand this. Jesus said, you will later, Peter. You will later. You'll understand it later.

And when Peter cursed and swore and denied Christ, you know what Jesus did for Peter spiritually? Just washed his feet. Forgave him. Restored him. Renewed him. Refreshed him. Jesus said, you'll understand what I'm talking about later on. And did Peter understand it? Indeed he did.

IV. Jesus' Love Was a Sanctifying Love

You see, what kind of love is the kind of love that Jesus had? Well, it's selfless love. It's steadfast love. It is serving love. But it is sanctifying love.

That person who has done you wrong, they need you to wash their feet. Do you know what washing their feet is? Ephesians 4:32: Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you. If I, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. Paul, if Jesus forgives me, then surely, I can forgive you, if I need to, right? Of course! If Jesus washed my feet, then surely I can wash yours. That's what He's saying. If I, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, then you ought to wash one another's feet.

Do you think that Jesus was putting on foot washing as a church ceremony? Do you think that's what He was doing? No. Like the Lord's Supper, or baptism—is that what He was doing? No. When Jesus said, you're to wash one another's feet as I have washed

your feet, all He is saying is this: Look. Look. If I am willing to show love to you when you have sinned against me, and failed me and denied me, if I am willing to do that, then you ought to forgive one another.

Is there anybody here who doesn't want to forgive somebody else? Is there anybody here who is feeding a fever? Is there anybody here who's carrying a grudge? Is there anybody here who's nursing a hurt? Is there anybody here who says, I will not forgive. Well, has Jesus washed your feet? Your Lord and master? You say, they don't deserve it. Did Peter deserve it? Did you deserve it when Jesus forgave you? True love is sanctifying love.

I want you to use your imagination. You have a good imagination? I want you to imagine Jesus Christ coming out of that door, walking down those steps. I mean, in a physical body. I want you to imagine Him coming out that door, and I want you to imagine Him without any garments, except a towel around His waist. Can you see Him? Whatever your conception, whatever Jesus looks like, there He comes. I mean in a body. This morning, right away, He's got our attention, right? I mean this is the Lord of glory coming out that door. And He's wearing a towel. And He has in His hand a basin of water.

Now, let's just imagine that He's walking through this congregation. You say, where is He going? Let's just imagine, He puts His eye on you, and walks right up to you, and stands in front of you with a basin in His hand—you and Jesus. And then, suppose the Lord Jesus this morning were to walk right up to you, and asks you this question, may I wash your feet? Oh Lord, you? You want to wash my feet? We know now how Peter felt, don't we?

Oh Lord, you can't wash my feet. And He says, if I don't wash your feet, I can't have anything to do with you. All right, Lord; all right, Lord, You can wash my feet. And see, the one who made the universe, He get's down on His knees, takes your shoe off and begins to wash your feet. How would you feel if Jesus this moment were washing your feet?

And then suppose He were to say to you, now, will you do something for me? I'll do anything for you, Lord. Okay. Would you wash my feet? You say, oh—what?—Lord, gladly I'll wash your feet. Yes, I'll wash your feet, Lord, those nail-pierced feet, those feet that trod the dusty shores of Galilee for me. Yes, Lord, I'll wash your feet. Let me have the basin. Yes, Lord, I'll wash your feet. Yes, Lord. Yes, I will wash your feet. Sure you would. Now, that's all imagination, right? Now, let's just put all imagination aside. I asked you to imagine that Jesus was here this morning. Now, friend, forget your imagination. Jesus is here today, okay? He is here. He is here. Didn't He say where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them? Didn't He say that? Didn't He say that? Is Jesus here today? Answer. He is here. So, no

imagination. He's here.

Does Jesus want to wash your feet today? He does. He does. He does want to forgive you. He does want to restore you. He does want to refresh you. He does want to restore you. He does want to refresh you. He does. He does. He does. Will you let Him? Will you let Him cleanse you? Will you let Him forgive you? Will you let Him restore you? Will you let Him refresh you? He wants to. He loves you that much.

Conclusion

Now, all imagination aside, will you wash His feet? Well, you say, I can't do that. Oh, yes, you can. How? Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you've done it unto me. Find somebody that needs that love, and give it to them. Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me; because the church is His body, is it not? We are members of one another. And when you forgive me, and when you restore me, and when you renew me, and when you refresh me, you are doing it as unto Jesus Christ, because I'm a part of His body.

Jesus said, a new commandment I give unto you that you love one another even as I have loved you. You say, well, I'm too important. Let me tell you something, dear friend: there is something you will never do, and that's look down on somebody while you're washing their feet. Amen? You're not going to look down on anybody when you're washing their feet.

And it's only a big man, only a big woman, big in the grace of God, knowing that they have come from God, knowing that they're going to God, knowing who they are, for it says God has accepted me. I accept that He accepts me, I accept me, and I accept you, and now you can accept me. Brethren, letting pride drive those wedges; love builds those bridges. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. That's how to love as Jesus loved.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, I have preached of my own heart today. And help me, Lord, not to give to people what I think they deserve, but what they need. And that is love. And help us, Lord, to love one another. In Jesus wonderful name. Amen.

One Another: The Tie That Binds

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 6, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 13:34

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

JOHN 13:34

Outline

Introduction

- I. Love One Another
- II. Receive One Another
- III. Greet One Another
- IV. Care for One Another
- V. Submit to One Another
- VI. Confess One to Another
- VII. Forgive One Another

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, please, to John chapter 13, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper. I want to share with you a verse—John 13, verse 14. The Lord has had the memorial meal with His disciples, and after this memorial meal that we call the Last Supper, Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, then the Lord gave a new commandment. It’s found in John 13 and verse 34, and here it is: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” One more time: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Take your pen, if you don’t mind writing in your Bible, and just underscore the phrase “one another,” because that’s what I want to be talking about tonight: “One Another: The Tie That Binds.”

Our church is a large church and a wonderful church. And I believe the most important thing that we have here at Bellevue Baptist Church, other than our love and obedience for the Lord Jesus Christ, is the fellowship that we have one with another. It is perhaps the most important quality in the life of any church; it is fellowship. Now, the

Bible calls that, “koinonia”—that’s the Greek word for it. And, it is a very wonderful word, and it means more than just simply getting together to drink coffee, and to enjoy one another. Actually, the word “koinonia,” or the word “fellowship,” means sharing something together and loving mutually—loving one another. And that’s what I want to talk to you about tonight. I want, really, just to go through the Bible, and find tonight some statements where God uses this wonderful, wonderful term, “one another,” and tell you what it means to those of us, who are here tonight, members of Bellevue Baptist Church.

Let me give you quickly eight commands that will prepare your heart to take the Lord’s Supper. And every one of these eight commands has this same phrase in them—“one another.” These are called the reciprocal commands of the Bible, and you put them all together and they spell “koinonia”; they spell fellowship.

I. Love One Another

Now, first of all, I’ve already read to you that we are to love one another. This was the last command that Jesus Christ gave to the church before His arrest, before His trial, and before His crucifixion, and what an important command it is. Now, those of us who are Christians who have bumper stickers on our cars, and we have lapel pins, and everything else, these are to let people know where we stand and who we are. But, Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.” I am to love you, and you are to love me. This love is not optional, but neither is it automatic. It is not optional because Jesus has commanded it. But it is not automatic because if it had been there would be no need for Him to command it. It is not optional, but it is not automatic.

Now, what is this love? Jesus said it is a new commandment. Well, over in the Old Testament we are told to love, but what is new about this commandment is this: The new commandment that Jesus gave is that they were to love one another as He had loved them. That’s new. Now, the Old Testament did not know anything about this love; it is a new quality of love.

Now, if you love me as Jesus loves me, do you know what you’re going to do for me? You’re not going to give me what I deserve—please don’t. You’re going to give me what I need. Amen? That’s what this love is. Love is not giving me what I deserve. Love is not giving me what I want. Love is giving to me what I need. Sitting all around you are people who need your love tonight, and Jesus Christ, not Adrian Rogers, has commanded you that you love others as He has loved you. Do you have it? Then we move on to the second of these commandments.

II. Receive One Another

Not only are we to love one another, but we are to receive one another. Now, I'd rather you jot these scriptures down tonight rather than turn to them, because we can compress the message if you'll just jot them down. Romans 15 and verse 7 says this: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Now, we're to love one another as Jesus loved us, and now we are to receive one another as Jesus has received us, to the glory of God.

Now, you take a church like Bellevue Baptist Church. It's a big church. And, folks, we have all kinds of people here. What a difference there is in so many of us! But, I don't believe we are as varied as that early church was. If you study the New Testament, you find that those people who came into that early church, they came from different religious and spiritual backgrounds. They came from different social backgrounds, different economic backgrounds. Some were Jews, some were barbarians, and some were Greeks; some were slaves, some were free. And some were rich, and many were poor. Some were young and some were old. And some were mature Christians and some were babes in Christ. And yet, from all of these different backgrounds, they came together and they received one another. I want to say this about Bellevue Baptist Church: there is plenty of room in this church for everybody, regardless of his background, regardless of his sex, regardless of his race, or her sex, or her race. There is room in the family for all.

I think of that church at Philippi that the Apostle Paul began, and that little handful of people that he had when he began that church. The Apostle Paul went there, and he was the intellectual, he was the philosopher, he was the scholar. And you know how the church got started? Well, there was a traveling sales lady from Thyatira, who was selling purple dye, her name was Lydia; and she invited them to come and begin the church in her home. And there was a little fortunetelling girl, a slave girl, who was demon-possessed and made a living for her masters by telling fortunes, and Paul rebuked the devil, and got this little girl saved. And then, there was a jailor who has taken Paul and Silas, put them in the innermost dungeon, and whipped them, and maltreated them, and this hardened jailor. And, if you'll take that intellectual, Paul, that traveling sales lady, that little former demon-possessed fortunetelling girl, and a hardened jailor, what would they have in common? One thing: Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ. And they all came together.

And in this church, friend, there is room for everybody. There is room for the babes in Christ and there is room for mature Christians. Have you ever thought about what it would be like to be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church and prepare a sermon on Sunday morning and think of the different kinds of people who are listening? And there are some people who say, "You know, I just like it when you go down way down deep

and stay down long and come up dry, or wet, or..." And there are other people, they say, "You know that fed me today; that was really deep. That fed me." And other people say, "You know, I don't understand what you were saying today. That just blew right past me." You ever thought about, you're talking to men and women, boys and girls. You're talking to new Christians and older Christians, Bible scholars; and people who have just been saved; all at the same time. And what may be a blessing to you may not be a blessing to someone else. What you understand someone else may not understand. But we are to receive one another. And weaker Christians are to be received. Every now and then somebody gets the idea, "Oh, the church is supposed to be pure. Oh, if everybody in the church were just Spirit-filled, walking in the Spirit, just living a pure godly life, that would be a New Testament church."

No...it...would...not...be. It wouldn't be good. It wouldn't be right. You say, "What? Brother Adrian, are you meaning to tell me that you don't think everybody in the church ought to be a mature, Spirit-filled Christian?" No. Not any more than everybody in your family ought to be a grown-up adult. Where are the little babies? Where are the children? Where are the new babes in Christ? There are some who've got to be coming along. There are some who've got to be just starting in the faith. And we're failing if we're not reaching out and getting the weak ones and the new ones and teaching them, aren't we? There's room in the family for everybody. There's room for these who are just getting started, and room for these who are mature in the Lord Jesus Christ. There ought to be some of every stripe and every kind in the church. You need to understand that. I love what Romans 14:1 says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." That is, don't get a new Christian, a weak Christian, somebody, a little babe in Christ, and then begin to beat him over the head with the Bible and club him because he doesn't understand everything you understand, or walk just like you walk in the Lord. He's got to grow, just like you had to grow. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Do you know what the Living Bible has to say about that? And, somebody got on to me the other day for quoting the Living Bible. They said, "How could you quote the Living Bible. That's not a Bible. That's a paraphrase." Of course, it's a paraphrase. We all paraphrase the Bible from time to time. You don't get your theology from the Living Bible. You get your theology from a good straight translation. But you can get insights from the Living Bible, and I like what the Living Bible says in Romans chapter 14 and verse 1, that the King James says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." The Living Bible says, "Receive a brother into the church if he scarcely believes that Christ can save him." He's just a babe. "Receive a brother into the church if he scarcely believes that Christ can save him." If he's weak in the faith, he needs a church, doesn't he? He's weak in the faith. He needs somebody to say, "Hey, you're welcome here. We receive

one another.” We’re to love one another. We are to receive one another.

III. Greet One Another

Here’s another command. We are to greet one another. I hope you never get tired of the time we have most Sundays, where we stand up and shake hands and greet one another. Did you know that’s a Bible command? Let me give it to you. Romans chapter 16, verse 16: “Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.” First Corinthians 16, verse 20, “All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss.” Second Corinthians 13, verse 12; “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Now, you ready to be biblical? Well then, we’d better start just kissing. Listen, three times, in the Bible, the Bible says we are to greet one another with a holy kiss. You say, “Well, Pastor, what does that mean?” Well, I just come back from the Middle East; I’ve been kissed a lot, in the Middle East. I really have by people, just reach up and kiss me on one cheek, and kiss me on the other cheek, because that’s an oriental custom. They kiss one another, just like we shake hands. If you’ve ever been in the Middle East, you’ll know that. I’m just thinking of something that just popped in my head this moment. I took my dad, who was in his eighties, to the Middle East; he’d never been there before on a trip. And when he got there, I introduced him to a man, and the man reached up and kissed my dad on one cheek and kissed him on another. And my dad said, “Well, that’s the first time anything like that ever happened to me.” It was funny to me. But, that was just the way they do in the Middle East. That’s just the custom in the Middle East.

Now, that is a holy kiss in Bible times. Customs change, but love doesn’t change. You know, the Bible says we are to give custom to whom custom is due. Now what we need to do is not kiss one another around here today—that was a first century custom; but we do need to find a way to show acceptance just like they did in the early church, and we’ll demonstrate that some way. Now, how should the greeting...? And, by the way, there is nothing wrong with a holy kiss—nothing wrong with that. But the import is this: we are to greet one another, because we have received one another, because we love one another. It all follows. When you love somebody, you want to greet them. That greeting should be personal. Now, remember what John said in 2 John verse 12—he said, “Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust—that I may—to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.” That’s why we come to church. If it weren’t for the face-to-face need, we could just mimeograph or, we don’t mimeograph anymore, but print the sermons and just mail them to people. John said, “I could write you to, but,” he said, “I want to see you face-to-face.” Now, I preach on radio, and I preach on television, and I preach through tape, but none of that—listen, none of that—is a substitute for our coming together, so we can greet one another.

I heard about a man who made up his mind that to impress his girlfriend he was going to write her a letter everyday, 365 days in the year. Every day of the year he wrote his girlfriend a letter. You know what happened? She married the mailman. There's nothing like being there and greeting one another. It should be personal, and it should be impartial.

Let me give you another verse—Romans 16, verse 15: “Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them.” Bellevue Baptist Church ought to be a church where everybody is somebody, and where Jesus Christ is Lord. For the Bible says, in James chapter 2 and verse 9, “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin...” You know, when a person comes into this church, they ought to be made to feel welcome. And wherever you are, on Sunday morning or Sunday night, when you come in, just don't come in and sit down, and fold your arms, and sit there like a cigar store Indian. Turn to the person on one side, and turn to the person on the other side, and greet them, and tell them, “Hi. It's good to see you. How are you? God Bless you. Are you a new member, an old member? I want to get to know you. I'm so-and-so, and, and give them your name, and just fellowship with one another. Please do it. Please do it. If you'll do that—if you'll do that—heaven will be pleased. For the Bible commands us that we are to love one another, and because we love one another, we are to receive one another, and because we receive one another, we are to greet one another. But, it doesn't end there. Let me give you another verse.

IV. Care for One Another

We are to care for one another. First Corinthians chapter 12—listen to these verses—24 and 25: “For our comely parts...”—that is, our attractive parts—“...have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” Now, this verse tells us many things. It tells us that we are members of the same body, and because we are members of the same body, God gave those—sometimes those—members that are the least attractive the most important responsibility. I imagine, probably, your face is more attractive than your liver. But it's your liver that is doing the work that is keeping you alive right now, not your face. Your face just makes you look kind of good—on some folks it does. And, what he's saying here is that, “We don't need to divide up because one person has one gift and another person has another gift. God made us different that He might make us one.” And when we receive one another in a church, then we begin to greet one another. And once we greet one another, and get to know one another, then we do what God has told us to do: we begin to care for one another. Oh, there are so many people in this community that are hurting. There are so many people that need

to be cared for. Every member of this church is to be a minister, to be ministering to other people. You say, “Well, Pastor, that’s what we pay the staff to do.” No, you don’t pay the staff to minister for you. In the first place, we don’t have enough money to hire that many staff. In the second place, they cannot do that, because they have to do the ministering that they must do as for their own responsibility. And you can’t hire anybody to minister for you. You must minister. You can’t pay anybody to show love to other people on your behalf. God has called us to care for one another.

V. Submit to One Another

Now, here again is what we are to do. Not only are we to care for one another, but we are to submit to one another. Ephesians chapter 5, verses 18 through 21, tells us that we are to submit one to another. We are to submit one to another. I am to be submissive to you. I am the pastor of the church, but that doesn’t mean I am the dictator of the church. Doesn’t mean I am the boss of the church. If anybody’s the boss, you are, the congregation. God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the head of the church. The pastor is the leader of the church. The deacons are the servants of the church. The committees cause the church to function, but the same pleases the multitude and we’re all in a mode of submission one to another. There are no big shots and no little shots. Don’t get the idea that submission is for women. Women are to submit to their husbands, because the Bible commands it. Members are to submit to the pastor, because the Bible commands it. But, we’re all to submit to one another. That’s mutual submission. Submission is not just for women; it’s for Christians. It’s for those who love the Lord.

VI. Confess One to Another

Now, next, and I’m going to hurry now. We need not only to submit to one another; but here’s one of the hardest things to do—we need to confess one to another. Let me give you the scripture—James chapter 5 and verse 16—the Bible says, “Confess your faults one to another.” Did you hear that? See, we’re not perfect. I’m not perfect. I have faults. I didn’t need to tell you that, not if you’ve been a member of this church for a long time. You have faults. We all have faults, and we don’t need to act like we don’t have faults. We are to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another. The reason some of us don’t get more prayer more than we do is we’re afraid to let our faults and our weaknesses be known. There are people standing by, ready to pray for us, if we’ll just say, “Brother, sister, I have a need.” Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Failure to do this often holds back forgiveness and healing and revival. What kind of confession are we talking about? Well, if there’s public sin then there needs to be public confession. If you make a public spectacle of yourself,

and you are a member of this church, your name is in the newspaper, or you, somehow, have brought public scandal, you need to get right, not only with God, but you need to get right with the church. You need to ask for forgiveness from the body or the group. Public confession follows public failure; personal confession, personal sin. If I sin against you, or you sin against me, then you need to go to that individual, and say, “Brother, sister, I’ve sinned against you. Forgive me. I confess my sin, not only to God, but to you—private sin, private confession. If you have a lustful thought, you don’t need to stand up in your Sunday School class, and say, “Brothers, forgive me. I had a lustful thought.” Tell God that you had a lustful thought. But if you have gossiped against somebody and have hurt their reputation, you need to tell them, “God, I want you to forgive me. I’ve failed you, and I am sorry I did thus and such.” Public sin, public confession; personal sin, personal confession; private sin, private confession. But we are to confess our faults one to another and pray one for another that we may be healed. Do you know that, when people begin to do this, revival is quick to follow?

VII. Forgive One Another

Now, let me mention, next of all, that we need to forgive one another. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32—the Bible says, “Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” You see, I am to do to you as Jesus Christ has done to me. Jesus said we are to love one another as He has loved us. We’re to receive one another as He has received us. We are to forgive one another as He has forgiven us. If God has forgiven you, then you need to forgive me, and I need to forgive you. Now, it costs to forgive, because, when you forgive, you take the hurt into yourself. If you owe me a hundred dollars, and you can’t pay me, and you say, “please forgive the debt,” if I forgive the debt, then it costs me a hundred dollars. If someone sins against you, and you forgive them, then you have taken the hurt, you have taken the injury into yourself, and you bear that injury. But all of these things are telling us, as we come to the Lord’s Supper, that we come to the Lord’s Supper to do it in a sense of communion, a sense of being one body. You see, really, that’s what the Lord’s Supper is really all about.

When the Apostle Paul was talking about the Lord’s Supper, I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians, if you will, chapter 10; now just get your Bible and turn to this, let me show you what he said—verse 16, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” You know what that word means—“communion”? It’s that word *koinonia*. It’s that word fellowship. “The cup that we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

Now, that's what we're here to do tonight. We're having a meal together. The Lord's Supper is not something that people get off and do by themselves. The Lord's Supper is where we come together and we say one to another, "Oh, we love one another." Because we love one another, we receive one another. Because we receive one another, we greet one another. And because we greet one another, we care for one another. And because we care for one another, we submit to one another. And because we submit to one another, we forgive one another. That's what it's all about. That's what it's all about. You know, this Lord's Supper tonight will be so beautiful and so wonderful if you can just take that cross and let the center beam of that cross that goes from earth and points up to heaven, say, "Lord there's nothing between me and myself." And let those arms that go out from either side, say, "Lord, there is nothing between me and any brother or sister in the church, or in the whole wide world." And when you're that way, then you're ready for what we're about to do, and that is to have this communion.

A lady wrote me sometime ago. I think it was a lady—it might have been a man, because he didn't sign a name. By the way, if you write me a letter, please sign your name. I won't be mad at you, even if you disagree with me. What you do when you don't sign your name, you don't give me a chance to give an answer, because I don't know who to answer to, and then I have to stand up in front and tell everybody. And now, so you are listening in to a letter. But she said, "You know, Pastor, I was listening to a man on television and on radio, and that man said that we don't need to examine ourselves when we come to the Lord's Supper." Said, "that just puts us under guilt. Why, we don't have to confess our sins. Our sins are already forgiven." Oh no, friend, our sins are not imputed to us when we receive Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. And no sin will ever be brought up against us to make us guilty before God, and we don't need to be haunted by that kind of guilt. But the Bible does say, let a man examine himself, and so let him eat—to see if there is any unconfessed, unrepented of sin in our heart. That is not meant to put you under a guilt trip. That's not meant to say that you ought to sit here tonight and be burdened down with your sin. Just the opposite. Why do we search our hearts? Why do we examine our hearts, when we come to the Lord's Table? That we might confess that sin, and be as clean, as pure, as the driven snow.

And anyone can do that tonight. I'm not trying to ask you to dredge up your past. And what God has buried, thank God, let it be buried. And that God will never impute sin to one who's been justified by faith. But on the other hand, if there has come into your heart, into your life, a grudge, a suspicion, a hate, an envy, a jealousy, pride, deal with it. And tonight, the blood of Jesus will cleanse you, and make you clean and pure, and ready for this Lord's Supper.

Conclusion

So, I want us to bow our heads tonight, and I want you just to think about these one another commands. And, if there's any of them that you've failed to fulfill, I want you to just ask God to forgive you, and cleanse you, and just say, "Nothing between my soul and the Savior, and nothing between my brother and myself. I want to be clean tonight, Lord, so that I can take this memorial meal." Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. We're going to spend just a few moments just thinking about these things. And, if God brings something to your mind, not something He's already forgiven, but something that hasn't been cleansed, name it, call it by name, confess it, ask Him to forgive you, and He will. And you'll be clean and ready tonight for the Lord's Supper. We're going to wait just a few minutes. †

Learning to Love

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 2, 1986

Main Scripture Text: John 13:34–35

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

JOHN 13:34–35

Outline

Introduction

- I. Real Love Is Selfless Love
- II. Real Love Is Steadfast Love
- III. Real Love Is Serving Love
- IV. Real Love Is Sanctifying Love

Conclusion

Introduction

John chapter 13:34–35 says: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you— Now they’ve been told to love before but it’s a new commandment because they’ve never been told to love this way before. They’re to love one another as I have loved you—*that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*”

You don’t need a lapel pin. You don’t need a bumper sticker. “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*” (John 13:35). I’m not against a lapel pin. I’m not against a bumper sticker. But dear friend the proof and the sign of love that we are disciples is that we love one another in the Lord Jesus Christ.

About 200 years ago an encyclopedia wrote an article on love, it took 5 pages. That same encyclopedia attempted to describe the atom and they took about four lines. Recently, in a recent addition of that encyclopedia they left love out all together and took five pages to explain the atom.

You know Jesus said: “*because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*” (Matthew 24:12). We live in a day of abounding iniquity and dwindling love. And, a psychiatrist said what people in this world need more than anything else is the ability to love and to be loved. We are sick. And, somebody said what the world needs now is love, love, love. That’s true. Love doesn’t make the world go round but it makes

the trip worthwhile. It really does. We need to love one another. And, there's a great need for just old-fashioned Bible love.

Now, love is very hard to explain and it's very hard to express, even romantic love. I remember when I fell in love with Joyce. I couldn't explain it but I felt like a grasshopper or roller skates. I'll tell you it's just so exciting to be in love. I remember when I kissed her the first time. We were grade school sweethearts and I felt those cold chills going down my back. Her popsicle was melting. Somebody said that love is an inward expressability of an outward "all-overishness." Or love is that feeling you get when you feel a feeling you've never felt before. It's hard to express love isn't it?

I'm talking about romantic love. How much more is it hard to express the love of God. When Jesus said: *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34). An example is what we need. And, in the 13th chapter of John we have an example of love worth finding. We have an example of love worth sharing. We have an example of love worth sending. The title of our message is Learning to Love. Now in this 13th chapter of the Gospel of John is the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Go back to the beginning of that chapter and look at it with me for just a moment. You are going to find out why I call it such a wonderful lesson on love. *"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world—just underscore that, having loved His own who were in the world—he loved them unto the end"* (John 13:1). And, now he's giving an example of this love, watch it. *"And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to*

you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:1-17).

You want to be happy. Pay attention because Jesus said, if you know this, and if you do it, that is the way to joy. Now, Jesus here has given us an example and there are four things I want you to see in this love that Jesus practiced. It’s all about love. The Bible says He loved His on right up until the end of His sojourn here on earth. He is still loving us. And, then He gives them a commandment that they are to love one another even as He has loved them.

Now, sandwiched in between those things is the washing of the disciple’s feet, which is the great illustration of the kind of love that I am talking about today.

I. Real Love Is Selfless Love

The very first thing I want you to notice about this love is that it is selfless love. Look if you will look at John 13:4-5: *“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”*

Now in Bible times they did something called foot washing. Now, they wore open sandals. The streets were dusty and if you came into a home, especially if it was a well-to-do home, there would be a slave there to meet you at the door. There would be a vessel, a basin of water. The slave would wear a certain kind of apron that was the mark of a slave like a towel wrapped around him and tied there in the back. And, when you would come in you would slip off your sandals and this slave would get down on his knees. He would take that cool water and he would begin to wash and massage your feet and just rub them gently and then take that fluffy towel and dry them off.

Can you imagine what that would feel like? I think that’s a custom, we ought to reinstate that custom. You see, it was meant not only to cleanse but refresh, relax, renew, restore and get a foot massage. You know, if your feet hurt you then you hurt all over, don’t you. And, you ladies would like that. My goodness, think how clean it would keep the house. Maybe we haven’t made as much progress as we think we’ve made. And, so that’s what they would do.

But, in this particular instance there was no slave there and the disciples had not even begun to think about washing one another’s feet. And, after supper Jesus *“laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself”* (John 13:4). That is the apron that a slave would wear. That’s what the very word here means, the apron of a slave. He is dressed now as a slave. I Mean the Lord of glory, the Lord who made everything is down on His knees washing fishermen’s feet.

Now, it would be one thing if a fisherman was washing another fisherman's feet or a slave was washing a fisherman's feet. But here's the Lord, the Master, who is washing their feet. Now, it's not just by happenstance that the Bible says He laid aside His garment. You see there's a glorious lesson there. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus. Do you remember reading in Philippians 2:5-8: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death."*

See it's a picture of Jesus laying aside His robes of glory. You see, Jesus laid aside His dignity but He didn't lay aside His deity. He laid aside all of that splendor, glory and majesty and He came to this earth to serve us. He didn't come to be served but to serve. Matthew 20:28 says: *"To give his life a ransom for many."* And, what we're talking about here is selfless love. Now, we live in a society that puts so much emphasis upon self.

And, the Louisville lip, Mohammed Ali say, "I am the greatest." And, he set the pattern for a great number of people today, We love to talk this me-ism, self-ism. "I'm the biggest and the best, I am the greatest." "I'm the best." Self-fulfillment. Self-aggrandizement. Self-glory. Self, self—that's the age in which we live. But Jesus, Jesus said no to self. Jesus laid aside that self-ism that He might serve others. Now Jesus said let a man deny Himself and take up His cross and follow Me."

Now, let me tell you something about humility here friend. And, I hope you'll learn this today what real humility is because you can't have genuine love without genuine humility. The Bible says real love *"seeketh not her own"* (1 Corinthians 13:5). You cannot have love unless you suffer. Now, real humility is not thinking lowly about yourself.

If you think that real humility is just going around saying, "I'm no good." Well friend you've got it 180% wrong. Real humility is realizing that you are really special. You are somebody. And, and when you just go around saying, "Well I just know I'm no good." Well number one that an insult to God because God made you. And, number two He redeemed you and the Bible says you're the righteousness of God in Christ. You're a child of God, a royal blue blood, a son of Heaven. You need to understand who you are.

You notice what this passage says: *"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet"* (John 13:3-5). You see dear friend, you cannot have real humility until you know who you are. I'm not talking about being an egotist. The Bible says: *"For I say, through the grace given unto*

me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3). You see, how am I to think of myself? Not in sinful exaggeration and false humiliation but in sober estimation. I am what I am by the grace of God. Jesus knowing that He came from God and is going to God. Do you know what I know? I know I'm born of God and I'm going to God. I know who I am.

You see it's not until I know who I am that I no longer feel threatened and afraid to act humble and to be humble. If I don't know who I am, if I don't have my self-assurance in Christ then it's hard for me to humble myself because I'm afraid I'm going to lose something. But, if I know I have something and it's of God then I can't lose it and I'm not at risk. I'm not jeopardizing myself to serve you. I don't have to grasp. I don't have to be greedy. Real humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. Real humility is understanding what you are in Christ and therefore being free to serve one another. *"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God"* (John 13:3). You see I gave you this awhile back but I want you to remember this. Listen, the Bible says in Ephesians 1:6: *"he hath made us accepted in the beloved."* Who is the beloved? The Lord Jesus. I'm accepted in Him. Now, let me tell you how. Here's the mark of real humility and here's the mark of real service. First of all we need to understand that God has accepted you. Not because of anything good in you. He has accepted you because of His grace. We are made accepted in the beloved. We're not valuable. God doesn't love us because we're valuable, we're valuable because He loves us. He just accepts us. Praise God for that. Can you accept that He accepts you? That's wonderful. Not because of you but because of His. He hath made us accepted.

God accepts us and that is grace. We accept that God accepts us, that is faith. Do you know what faith is? Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. In spite of all of my sin and my failure—bless God, hallelujah—He loves me and accepts me. That is faith.

All right now look, Grace! He accepts me. Faith, I accept that He accepts me. Peace, now I accept me. I'm at peace with God, others and with myself because for the first time have accepted me. I know who I am. I know I'm the righteousness of God in Christ. I know I've been saved. I know I've been redeemed—Hallelujah—I can finally accept me. That doesn't mean that I accept my faults, failures and foibles. But I know beyond that, beneath that, through that, over that and around that is the grace of God. I know who I am in Jesus Christ. I accept me. Now, when I accept me for the very first time I am free to accept you. You see until I am no longer threatened I can't really accept you. I want to use you, abuse you, misuse you, categorize you, manipulate you and merchandize you because I'm not sure of myself. And, so therefore I have to be

grasping and greedy. I have to put you down in order to try and push myself up. But, when God accepts me and I accept that God accepts me, then I accept me and for the first time I'm free to accept you.

Now, when I am no longer trying to manipulate you and when I can truly humble myself around you then for the first time you are free to accept me. You see God accepts me, that's grace. I accept that He accepts me, that's faith. I accept me, that's peace. I accept you, that's love. You accept me, that's fellowship. And, it all begins with understanding who I am in the Lord Jesus. Jesus knowing that He came from God, Jesus knowing that He's going to God, that the Father had delivered all things unto Him, He is now free to wash to wash their feet. Do you know the people who are unfree to love? They don't know who they are in the Lord Jesus. They have not discovered the riches that they have in Christ Jesus. Friend, when you understand who you are in Christ Jesus then you've got love to give because you've got nothing to lose. Out of His infinite riches in Jesus He gives and gives and gives again. You don't have to be afraid to share yourself any more.

Real love, listen, is selfless love. There is nothing so empty as a self-centered life. There is nothing so centered as a self-empty life. Nothing so centered as a life that says I don't have to prove anything any more. I am free now just to serve you and to give myself to you rather than to use you. Real love is selfless love.

II. Real Love Is Steadfast Love

Secondly, I want you to see that real love is steadfast love. Look again in verse one if you will. *"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world—that is, in just moments He is going to be crucified. In a few hours—unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"* (John 13:1).

I mean here most of us would have been saying, "I don't have time to be washing anybody's feet, I can tell you that much. I'm going to be crucified. I've got to be thinking about myself. In just a little while I'm going to be nailed up on that cross." But the Bible says, *"Jesus knowing"* (John 13:3). I mean with full in view knowing that dark Gethsemane, bitter Calvary, the shame, the rejection, the humiliation was there He's still loving His disciples.

Now, let me tell you something else about real love. Real love is steadfast. Oh it's easy to love everybody when everything is lovely. I mean when they love us. But, do you know who Jesus was loving? Jesus was loving Judas. The Bible says Satan had entered into the heart of Judas and yet Jesus washed his feet. Didn't Jesus teach us to love our enemies and to do good to those who spitefully use us? Thank God He practiced what He preached. And those disciples, do you know if you were to read in

the Bible what they were talking about that same hour? They were arguing whose going to be the greatest among them. And, while they are arguing about who is going to be the greatest Jesus is washing their feet.

Now, they didn't deserve it. And, Jesus had other things to think about. But, He kept on loving. His love was steadfast. Do you have that kind of love? Do you have love that does not change because of circumstances? I asked myself this as I prepared this message. You see, so many times we excuse ourselves don't we? "I have a headache," or "I'm tired," or "I've been sick," or "you don't know the pressure I'm under." No one was under more pressure than the Lord Jesus Christ. In a moment He is going to sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane and He is still loving. If you want to know what you are full of you see what spills out when you are jostled. Amen? That's what you're full of, whatever spills out. And, out of the Lord Jesus came infinite love. And do you know what this tells me. He's never going to stop loving me. *"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 8:38-39).

Actually when it says: *"he loved them unto the end"* (John 13:1). The Greek word is *istelos*. He loved them unto perfection. His perfect love never, ever stops. Out of His infinite riches in Jesus He gives and gives again. Real love worth sending is steadfast love.

III. Real Love Is Serving Love

Now, the third thing I want to say about this love is not only is it self-less and steadfast love but it was serving love. Look if you at John 13:5: *"After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."* Now, listen friend, Jesus literally did something. He didn't just talk about love, He actually showed love. The Bible says in I John chapter 3:18: *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."*

Do you know what could happen this morning? This morning you could get it down in your notebook. And you could say, "Hey let's see what the pastor said. He said first of all, of yes I remember. He said that we are to have the kind of love this to be selfless love. Oh what was the second point oh yes I remember, it's to be steadfast love. What was the third kind of love? Yeah, I've got it, serving love." And, you get that in your notebook.

Friend listen. Get it in your life. Don't love in word but in deed and in truth. Jesus is literally doing something. Jesus gave His disciples what they needed at that moment. Do you know what they needed at that moment? They needed to be renewed, refreshed, restored, revived and reinvigorated. That's what they needed. Now, let me

tell you what love does. If you love me let me tell you what you are going to do for me. If you love me you are not going to give me what I want because many times what I want is not what I need and what I need is not what I want.

My dad use to say, "You need a spanking." He was right. But, I sure didn't want one. Amen. If you love me you're not going to give me what I want. And, you're certainly not going to give me what I deserve if you love me. What did Judas deserve? He didn't deserve to have his feet washed. What did those disciples deserve? They didn't deserve to have their feet washed. They were arguing about who's going to be the greatest. Jesus did not give them what they desired nor what they deserved but he gave them what they needed.

And, that's what love does. Love gives what is. It is serving love. Jack Hyles is one of my favorite preachers. He's pastor of the First Baptist church of Hammond, Indiana. He is a great soul-winner. I heard Jack one time speak and he said he went into an airport restaurant there to eat breakfast. And the lady there said, "Would you like a menu?" He said, "Yes ma'am." "You like some coffee." "Yes ma'am." "You ready to order." "Yes madam." She said, "Yes ma'am, yes ma'am, yes ma'am. Is that all you can say is yes ma'am?" He said, "Yes ma'am." And, she was very snippity to him. He went ahead and ordered and she just kind of slung the food in front of him. He ate it and she had a scowl on her face.

And, when he got up to leave he put something like a 10-dollar bill, a very large bill, by the plate and walked out. She said, "Hey, you left some money on the table." He said, "Don't people tip around here. She said, "You mean that's for me?" He said, "Yes ma'am." She said, "You would give me a tip like that after the way I've treated you?" "Yes ma'am." She said, "I don't understand it. Why?" He said, "I looked at you. I could tell you were hurting." He said, "I knew you must have some kind of problem. I just felt maybe this would make your day a little better." She started to cry. She said, "Mister you don't know the problems I've got. I got up this morning with a child that was sick and I had to go to work. This is the only joy that I have. I don't have anybody else. I don't have a husband. And, I couldn't get a babysitter and I had to leave that sick child alone at home to take care of himself." And then on the way here to work my car broke down and I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't have the money to have it fixed. I was late to work and the boss chewed me out." He said, "I knew you were hurting." And he told her about Jesus. Right there though tears she gave her heart to Christ. And, she was wonderfully saved. Now most of us would have said, "She doesn't deserve a tip." And, she didn't. He didn't give her what she deserved. He gave her what she needed. Isn't that right?

You see, that's what love is. Real love doesn't give people what they deserve. Judas didn't deserve that. The disciples didn't deserve that. But, Jesus knew at that moment

that was the thing that they needed. And that's what Jesus did.

And, it was a small thing, in a way, washing feet. It was a humble thing. An insignificant kind of a thing that only a slave would do. Do you know something folks? We've got a lot of those kinds of jobs around this church. We need nursery workers. It would be nice if some of you were to lay aside your Sunday finery as Jesus laid aside His garments and go work in the nursery. We need people to work on the parking lots. We need people to work in the -kitchen. We need people to do some of the jobs that are not really glamorous jobs. Not necessarily the thing that is glamorous but the thing that is needed. Real love is serving love. Not just in word but in deed and in truth. Not just giving people what they deserve or what they desire but what they need.

IV. Real Love Is Sanctifying Love

Now the last thing, real love is sanctifying love. I want you to look now as we continue to read here in this Word of God. John 13:6 says: *"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"* Jesus answered and said unto him: Jesus *"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter"* (John 13:7).

That is Peter, there's something deeper than this, you don't see the whole thing. I'm doing something highly symbolic. *"Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"* (John 13:8). The word "no part" here literally means "you have no fellowship with me." *"Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean"* (John 13:9-11).

Now, what's Jesus talking about now? The figure is moved. He is no longer talking about physical dirt on physical feet. Now, he is talking about spiritual dirt. Now, He is talking about forgiveness when He said to Peter: *"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter"* (John 13:7). Because Peter cursed and swore and denied Christ and Christ forgave Peter He said, "You'll understand it later on, what I'm talking about."

You see, just as a person has a bath, so we get saved and we're cleansed from our sins. But, just as a person who has had a bath goes out to walk through dusty feet, he gets his feet dirty. Those of us who have been saved, still we live in a world that is polluted with sin. And, as it were, we get our spiritual feet defiled. And, we need to come to Jesus, not to get bathed again but we come to get out feel washed. We've already been saved and once you're saved you're always saved.

That is day by day we come to the Lord Jesus and let Him renew us, refresh us,

restore us and reinvigorate us. We need to come to Him for spiritual foot washing. That is, Jesus is now talking about the forgiveness of sins which is daily sin, confessing our sin, and getting our sin forgiven. Peter said: *“Thou shalt never wash my feet”* (John 13:8). I feel like saying, “You better let Him, you’re about to put it in your mouth.” Because Jesus said: *“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”* (John 13:8). Now, my dear friend if you don’t come to Jesus daily and let Him wash your feet you can’t fellowship with Him. Now, you are saved but you’ve got to have that fellowship with Him. And, that is daily confessing your sin and daily letting him restore you.

But, now watch it. His love was sanctifying love. And, our love is to be sanctifying love. We’re to wash one another’s feet. *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet”* (John 13:14). If He forgives us, we are to forgive one another. Right? Of course. If He forgives me and I am to forgive you. What does the Bible say in Ephesians? *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). And the Bible says: *“if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.”* (Galatians 6:1) That’s a spirit of humility. The only way you can wash somebodies feet is in humility.

I want you to watch this. I’m not going to wash his feet. But, suppose I’m washing Bob’s feet right now. There is one thing about it. I’ll guarantee you I can’t look down on Bob while I’m washing His feet. Isn’t that true? You can’t look down on anybody when you are washing their feet. “Restore such a one in the spirit of humility, and, in the spirit of meekness.” They don’t need a lecture, they need love and they need restoration. And you know somebody—is there somebody—who has done you wrong. Listen, Judas is going to betray Christ. The disciples had mistreated and abused Christ. And, He is washing their feet. He is restoring, refreshing and renewing them.

Now, if He has done that for us don’t you think we ought to do that one for another? Do you know what real love is? Real love is sanctifying love. It makes the other person what they ought to be. And, it loves them into fellowship with one another and with the Lord. That is what real love is.

Conclusion

Now, I want you to use your imagination now. Imagination can be a very useful tool. And, please give me your total attention right now and use your imagination. I want you to imagine Jesus Christ walking in that door right over there in bodily form. Walking right in that door, Jesus. No doubt about it, we know it is Jesus. He walks in to this auditorium this morning and He dressed this way. He has a towel about His waist. And, He has in His hand a basin of water. And, you know it’s Jesus. And, let’s suppose everybody here He walks up to you and looks into your eyes, with a basin of water,

looks right at you. Jesus, looking right into your face. And, you're face to face with Jesus Christ.

And, now let's imagine He asks you a question. He says to you, "May I wash your feet?" What if He said that to you this morning? I mean literally in a body. He came right to you and said, "May I wash your feet?" How would you feel? I mean to have the Lord—the maker of the universe, the one who died for you—ask you that question, "May I wash your feet?" At first you'd say, "oh no Lord. You can't wash my feet." Then you'd remember what Peter said wouldn't you Then you'd say with tears—hot tears coursing down our cheeks and with love inexpressible—"Yes Lord. You may wash my feet."

Can you imagine Him untying your shoes, removing our socks, taking those nail pierced hands and bathing and massaging your feet this morning? How would you feel if He did that? And, then suppose when He finished He looked at you and He said, "Now my child will you wash my feet." What would you say? "O Lord, O Lord that I could wash your feet." And, you look down at those nail pierced feet—those feet that walked the dusty shores of Galilee and those feet that never walked in sin—and you would say, "Gladly Lord Jesus, gladly Lord Jesus will I wash Thy blessed feet." And, with tears you would kneel before your Lord and lovingly you would bathe the feet of Jesus. Now, all that is imagination. Now, I want to lay the imagination aside. And, tell you ladies and gentlemen that Jesus Christ is here this morning. Jesus Christ is here this morning. And, He wants to wash your feet.

Are you willing to let him? Are you willing to let Him cleanse you and forgive you of every sin and restore you, renew you and refresh you? Are you? Now, I want to ask you another question. Are you willing to wash His feet this morning? You say, "Well wait a minute. I can't wash His feet." Oh. Let me tell you something. Jesus said: "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*" (Matthew 25:40). Now, don't tell me that you would want to wash the feet of Jesus Christ if you don't want to wash the feet of that brother or that sister sitting next to you this morning.

You say, "They don't deserve it." That my friend is the love I'm talking about. That you would wash their feet. Is there anybody that you're holding a grudge against? Is there anybody that's done you wrong? Are you willing to kneel before them and say, "I want to refresh you and restore you. I want to wash your feet, I want to love you and I want to forgive you as God for Christ sake hath forgiven me." Friend, Jesus said: "*If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet*" (John 13:14). "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*" (John 13:24). That's love worth finding. That's love worth sharing. That's love worth sending. Let's bow in prayer.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 27, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 14

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

JOHN 14:16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Restore the Presence of Jesus in Us
- II. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Represent the Person of Jesus to Us
- III. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Recall the Promises of Jesus for Us
- IV. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Release the Power of Jesus Through Us

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and open please to John chapter fourteen. Keep your Bibles open in your laps because we're going to be in John chapter fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen tonight. Our sermon subject is the work of the Holy Spirit. I know that's a very prosaic title but it is a very important subject, the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, my dear friend, you will never be successful as a Christian, you will never be an overcomer, you will never be victorious, you will never be a soul winner, you will never be a prayer warrior, you will never give glory to Jesus Christ in any realm in any way if you're ignorant of the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. What I have to say to you tonight is not incidental and it is not optional. It is fundamental and it is mandatory if you would live the Christian life and know the joy and the thrill and the victory that God has for you.

Now, in these chapters—John fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen—we have delineated for us the work of the Holy Spirit of God. These chapters, along with chapter seventeen, are what we call the upper room discourse. It's this very intimate time that the Lord Jesus had with his disciples just before he went back home to Heaven. I want to tell you four things tonight that the Holy Spirit of God wants to do for you, through you, in you, and with you. And, I want you to pay close attention to these four things because if you get them down in your heart and down in your life then they will literally transform your life.

I. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Restore the Presence of Jesus in Us

Number one, the Holy Spirit was given that he might restore the presence of Jesus in us. Look if you will in John fourteen and I begin reading in verse sixteen. Jesus said, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you”* (John 14:16–18). Now, here the Lord Jesus is promising that the Holy Spirit will come to reside in us. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was active. But, in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was a presence with men. He was with men. He came upon men but in the New Testament He is to be in women. The word “abide” means that He is to come to dwell permanently in us. He says, *“I will not leave you comfortless...”* (John 14:18). The word “comfortless” here means helpless orphans. There's probably not anything that is more helpless than a little baby without a mommy and a daddy. Now, that's what we would be like without the Holy Spirit. He says, *“I will not leave you comfortless...”* (John 14:18). I'm not going to leave you helpless orphans. I am going to come with you, I'm going to come to you, I am going to live in you, and I am going to abide. That is, I am going to dwell by my Spirit in you forever.

Now, notice verse sixteen, it's very wonderful. He says, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter...”* (John 14:16). Now, Greek scholars teach us that there are two words for “another.” One means “another of a different kind” and the other word means “another of the same kind.” For example, in transportation if you had a bicycle and you got another form of transportation—a horse—you would use the word for “another of a different kind.” You no longer have a bicycle but a horse. But, if you get another bicycle then that's “another of the same kind.” Now, you say brother Rogers, that sounds kind of technical. It may be technical but it's worth it if you'll learn it. In John 14:16 when Jesus said, *“...he shall give you another Comforter...”* did not say I'm going to send you another of a different kind. He meant I will send you another of the same kind. That's the word for another that he uses here and what he means is there's someone just like me who's going to come.

Now, let me give you a good definition of the Holy Spirit and let me just tell you who the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian. The Holy Spirit is so much like Jesus. He says in verse eighteen that He will not leave you helpless orphan, He will come to you. Now, He's not confused, on the one hand He said I'm going to send a comforter, and then on the other hand He says I will come to you. My dear friend, because Jesus is God and because the Holy Spirit is God and because the Holy Spirit has come from the Lord Jesus Christ to represent the Lord Jesus—though there is a

distinction in the God head—when you have Christ you have the Holy Spirit. And, when you have the Holy Spirit you have Christ. Now, this is so exciting because you see Jesus was with the disciples when he said this, but notice what he said in verse seventeen, *“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you—that is, I'm right here with you and you know me—and shall be in you”* (John 14:17).

Now, while the disciples were there the holy Jesus was with them. I mean, he was in their midst. He walked with them, talked with them, and fellowshiped with them. And, boy he was right there with them. But, he said to them, it is better for you that I go away, *“...It is expedient for you that I go away...”* (John 16:7). Now, look in John sixteen, verse seven for a moment let. Let me just show you this, *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”* (John 16:7).

Now, I believe if most of us were honest and if there was a time in our lives when we wished that we could have lived on earth it would be when Jesus walked the shores of Galilee, isn't that true? Just nod your head. We said, “Oh, how wonderful that would have been.” Man, if I could have been there to see him feed the five thousand. Wouldn't it have been wonderful to see Lazarus come up out of the grave? Wouldn't it have been wonderful to see Jesus walking on the water? I still almost wish I could have seen that. I mean, to be there and to see the Lord Jesus perform all of these miracles.

Most of us have a feeling in our heart that those disciples had something we don't have—that it was better for them than it was for us—but friend, not so. Jesus says it is better for us than it was for them. Jesus said in John chapter sixteen and verse seven, *“...It is expedient for you that I go away...”* (John 16:7). The word “expedient” means better for you that I go away. Listen folks, I'll tell you why it's better because when Jesus was here He was located in a particular sphere of geography. He was here in a particular spot and if He was in one spot He couldn't be in another spot. Do you remember there in John chapter eleven when Martha got so upset at Jesus because He wasn't there and Lazarus died? You can almost see her wagging her finger in the face of Jesus and she said, *“...Lord , if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”* (John 11:21). Oh, but you weren't here. Friend, we'll never ever have to say any more, “Oh Jesus, if you'd only been here, it wouldn't have happened.” Friend, He is here tonight and the wonderful thing about it is now that Jesus can be with me right here. He can be with my son Steve down in Florida, he can be with you right now, and he can be with your grandpa over in Arkansas. You see, dear friend, He is everywhere. He is in every Christian. The most wonderful thing about it is I have all of Jesus there is. I mean, He's mine and He is my personal Savior. You see, I have fellowship with him today and it's been sweet and all of Jesus there is, is in me and he's mine. But, all of Jesus there

is, is in you and he's yours, isn't that wonderful? That everyone of now have the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in us. And, that's so wonderful. That's so precious. That's so glorious. I have all there is of Jesus and so do you.

II. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Represent the Person of Jesus to Us

Now, the first reason that the Holy Spirit came is to restore the presence of Jesus in us. But, the second reason that he came is to represent the person of Jesus to us. Look in John chapter fourteen and verse twenty-six. Look at it. It says, *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"* (John 14:26). Now, the word "comforter" here is the word, "paraclete," "*paracletote*." And, it's the same word if you turn in your Bibles to First John chapter two and verse one. Let me show you something. This is worth coming for just to learn this. First John chapter two and verse one and just keep your hand there in John fourteen. First John chapter two and verse one says, *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1). Now, in First John two and verse one the Bible says we have an advocate, but in John fourteen and verse twenty-six the Holy Spirit is called the comforter.

Now, dear friend, those two words are the same words in the Greek language. The word *paraclete* translates both comforter and advocate. Now, what I'm trying to say is that advocate and comforter both translate *paracletote*. Now, I don't want to get too technical again but I want to say that the Holy Spirit is a paraclete and a paraclete is an advocate. Well, you say, "you've still got me in the dark cause I don't know what a paraclete is and I don't know what an advocate is." Well, let me give it to you this way, an advocate is a fancy name for a lawyer. A lawyer is somebody who pleads a cause, who pleads a case. Now, not only is the Holy Spirit given to restore the presence of Jesus in us, but the Holy Spirit of God is given to reveal the person of Jesus to us. He is here to represent Jesus. You see, every Christian is related to two advocates, you're related to two advocates.

Now, the Bible says in First John chapter two and verse one, *"...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1). Now, Jesus is my advocate and Jesus represents me to the Father. You see, there's a great lawsuit going on in the heavens. The devil is the prosecuting attorney. The Bible calls the devil the *"...accuser of our brethren..."* (Revelation 12:10). He's taking notes on me and he's watching me all the time. And, anytime I do wrong he reports it in Heaven. He accuses me before the father and he points out my faults, flaws, and failure. But, I sin

and I'm ashamed of my sin but when I sin the Bible says in 1 John 2:1, "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ...*" and He takes my case and He pleads my cause to the father. And, while the devil accuses me the Lord Jesus with his nail pierced hand stretched out says, "Holy father, it is true that Adrian sinned. It is true that he failed you father. It is true that he stumbled and fell father. But, father, you see these nail prints in my hand, this wound in my side, on the basis of these wounds I intercede for him. I plead his call. I paid for that sin with my blood and I atone for that sin. Even though he has failed and stumbled, father, because he confessed that sin and put it under my blood, Father, count him justified and clean and pure." Isn't it wonderful to have such an advocate in the heavens?

If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And, so I'm related to that advocate and He represents me to the Father. When the devil gets on my case I can just say, "See my lawyer," amen, see my lawyer. But, on the other hand, listen now, I'm related to another advocate. This advocate is not God the son, but this advocate, this lawyer, is God the Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit does not represent me to the father. Jesus represents me to the father. The Holy Spirit represents Jesus to me. He takes the things of Christ and makes them known to me. It is the Holy Spirit in me that is pleading the cause of Jesus Christ in me and he is taking the things of Christ and making them real.

You see, in Bible times every tribe had a tribal advocate and that tribal advocate was there to plead the cause of that particular tribe or family. That advocate was there to protect the family name. That advocate was there to protect the interest of that particular family. Now, I want to tell you that one of the supreme functions of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus in us all that he was to the disciples and even more. He is to represent the Lord Jesus Christ to me. You see, it is only through the Holy Spirit that I can really know Jesus.

Let me show you something here in 1 Corinthians chapter two. Turn to it with me for a moment and let's look in verse nine. First Corinthians chapter two and verse nine. Now, this is a verse of scripture that is often quoted at funerals. I've quoted it quite a bit at funerals myself. We love it. Listen to it, it says here, "*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*" (1 Corinthians 2:9). We often say, "Oh, if you could just see how wonderful Heaven is." ...*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*" (1 Corinthians 2:9). That is, one of these days when we get to Heaven we'll know all of these wonderful things. Well, that may be true to some degree but that's not what Paul is saying here. Paul is not saying that you have to wait till you get to Heaven to see them. Look to what he says in verse nine. He says you don't understand it with

your eyes, you don't understand it with your ears, and you don't understand it with your heart. That is, with your emotions. But, notice in verse ten, *“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Now, the Holy Spirit of God searches, discerns, and understands the deep things of God—what you can't learn with your eye, what you can't learn with your ear, and what you cannot learn with the emotion of your heart—and you can know when the Holy Spirit of God makes those things real to you.

Now, friend, I want to tell you that the Holy Spirit of God knows God in such a way that he can make God known to you. He can make Christ known to you and he represents the things of Christ to you. Is Jesus Christ real to you? God has given you a teacher to make Jesus real to you. Look in John chapter fifteen. Let's go back to John now where we were and let's look in John fifteen and verse twenty-six. It says, *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall—do what?—testify of me”* (John 15:26). That is, he is going to plead my cause.

Look if you will in John sixteen, verses thirteen and following, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me...”* (John 16:13–14). Do you see what the Holy Spirit does? He represents the person of Christ to us. Elmer Bailey was telling me about being in a church a few weeks ago. And, he said, “pastor, there was something wrong in that church,” and he said, “you could sense it when you just came into the church.” He was there in an enlargement campaign and he said, “I finally discovered what was wrong.” He said, “I went outside and I looked and there was a sign outside which said we preach the Holy Ghost, we preach the Holy Ghost.” How does that strike you? Good or bad. There's nothing wrong with the Holy Spirit, is there? But, you see, listen folks, a church that is spirit filled doesn't say we preach the Holy Ghost. A church that is spirit filled says we preach Christ. You see, you beware of any parade that's being led by the Holy Spirit. Now, this is not to deprecate the Holy Spirit. He is as much God as God the son is God. He's as much God as God the father is God. But, the Bible says He will not speak of himself, He will glorify me, and He will take the things of mine and will show them unto you. What is the office work of the Holy Spirit of God? He is a divine paraclete. He is an advocate who takes the things of Christ and reveals the things of Christ to us. And, it's so wonderful to have a teacher like that.

You know, all of us are just a little strange except me and Paul and I'm not too sure about Paul. We're all just a little strange aren't we? We all have our little idiosyncrasies, peccadillos and proclivities Right? Sure. Now listen, you have a teacher who understands you perfectly living in you.

Did you know that when Thomas Alva Edison was a little boy they said he was a dunce and a nincompoop. He couldn't have understanding and his teacher was so upset with him. They held him back and finally the preacher didn't even want to teach him. She said, "He's a numskull, he's stupid, and he can't understand anything." And, his mother said, "my son is not stupid, my son is brilliant. You teachers just don't understand my boy. He's different. I will teach him myself. His mother, with a mother's heart and a mother's love, was able to look past what some of the teachers were calling stupidity and into his heart. This man that had such a brilliant mind that needed to be loose."

I want to tell you friend, the one that loves you better than your mother—my dear mother, who is here tonight loves me, let me get that correct loves me—that's the dear Holy Spirit of God. He, dear friend knows how to take the things of Christ and show them to you. He will teach you things that your pastor cannot teach you. And, He'll teach you things that your Sunday school teacher cannot teach you. But, he will teach you in the precious precincts of the inner most being of your heart .He will reveal the things of Christ to you and things that you may not be able to articulate but things you will know. *"...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit..."* (1 Corinthians 2:9–10). Thank God for the His Spirit of God who makes Jesus real, is Jesus real to you?

I say this not braggingly, God knows I say it thankfully, but Jesus is real to me. I know him. I mean He's not somebody I know about. I love him, I laugh with Him, and I fellowship with Him. When I'm in a hotel room He's my guest. I'm His guest. He's not somebody I preach about and that's all. I know Jesus. I don't say that braggingly. I don't know Him as I ought to know him, bless God. I don't know Him as I'm going to know Him, but I know Him, do you know Him? Somebody asked George Truitt, is God real to you? He said, "He is more real to me than the flesh on my body and the skin on that flesh." The Holy Spirit of God will make Jesus real to you. The Holy Spirit of God is an advocate. He is to represent the Lord Jesus Christ. He's to take the things of Christ and show them unto you. He has been sent to restore the presence of Jesus in us, and we're never alone. He has been sent to represent the person of Jesus to us.

III. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Recall the Promises of Jesus for Us

He's been sent thirdly dear friend, to remind us or to recall the promises of Jesus for us. I want you to look in John chapter fourteen and look with me in verse twenty six, John chapter fourteen, verse twenty six, Jesus said, *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things—now we*

talked about that, but now watch this—*and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*” (John 14:26). Now, not only does He quicken your mind to learn the truth but he quickens your mind to recall the truth. This is—in a sense—a ministry to the subconscious. Remember we talked this morning about the subconscious mind, the stronghold and how the devil can get a stronghold. The devil can get a claw in your brain, as it was some fortress there, some high thing, some reasoning, and some imagination that wards against God.

Well, let me tell you something friend, the Holy Spirit can get a strong hold too, that’s wonderful. And, the Holy Spirit can entrench himself in your heart. That’s when you become a saint in the loose sense of the word. We’re all saints. But, I mean that’s when you become a real victorious Christian. The Holy Spirit of God has a stronghold. Remember when we said that so many of these strongholds are in the sub-conscious. Just the tip of the iceberg is showing. Well, friend, I want to tell you tell you that the Holy Spirit of God has a ministry to the subconscious and he brings things to your mind. I cannot tell you how many times I’ve been preaching and out of the subconscious will come the word of God. I cannot tell you how many times I have been witnessing and out of the subconscious will come the word of God. I cannot tell you how many times I’ve been in a debate, defending The Word of God and the Holy Spirit will say tell them this. Listen folks, I want to tell you something. The Bible says that God will give his to people “...*the tongue of the learned...*” (Isaiah 50:4) and he will bring things to your remembrance and you don’t have to have a good memory. So as long as you’re just yielding to the Holy Spirit of God, He’s doing this ministry.

Let me show you something here that’s just so precious. I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn to Luke chapter twelve. You’re in John, just turn backward to Luke. Luke chapter twelve and let’s begin reading in verse eleven. Jesus is talking about persecution and persecution that will come to Christians. This is what Jesus says, “*And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers—that is, you’re going to be brought before the ecclesiastical and the civil high mucky mucks. Alright now, listen to what he says—take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say*” (Luke 12:11–12). To me that’s one of the greatest promises in the Bible.

Mothers, I’m not talking to my mother, I’m talking to any mother, mothers in general, and my mother included. What would you do if they put you somewhere, pointed the gun at one of your children, put the Christian cross on the ground and said, “spit on that cross, deny Christ or we’ll pull the trigger and kill your child.” Or let’s make it worse, “we’ll torture your child and dismember your child bit by bit before you until you deny Christ.” What would you do? You say preacher, “I don’t know what I would do.” And,

that's right, you don't and I don't know what I'd do but I'm going to tell you something else. I'm not going to worry about it, not at all. You know why? It'll be given to me in that day what to do. The Holy Spirit of God will tell you exactly and precisely what to say. And, Jesus said don't you bother your head worrying about that kind of thing. He, the Spirit of God will bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever He said to you. What a marvelous and what a wonderful ministry that the Holy Spirit of God has to the children of God. He is here to recall the promises of Jesus to us and I thank God for it. Isaiah fifty, verse four says, *"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned"* (Isaiah 50:4). And, when emergencies come he makes us adequate.

IV. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Release the Power of Jesus Through Us

I want to say one last thing about the Holy Spirit of God. This is the fourth ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God has been given not only to restore the presence of Jesus in us, not only to reveal the person of Jesus to us, not only to recall the promises of Jesus for us, but He has been given to release the power of Jesus through us. Now, look again in John chapter sixteen with me for just a moment. John chapter sixteen and let's go back to this final verses. Verses seven and eight, look at it. It says, *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you"* (John 16:7). Now, watch this, *"...I will send him unto you. And when he is come—that is, when he is come to you—he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged"* (John 16:7–11).

Now, dear friend, we sang tonight songs about battle, Onward Christian Soldiers. We sang tonight about victory and overcoming. And, our Lord has told us, when He was here on this earth He gave us great commission. He told us to go out and to preach the gospel everywhere. He told us to be victorious. Can you imagine a commander telling his army, "We're going into battle so long I'm going off on a vacation, I'll see you later." Oh no, listen friend, when the Lord Jesus Christ gave them their marching orders He did not abandon them. He did not walk off and leave them. And, these early Christians went out against the imperial might of Rome. They went out against the stiff-necked bigotry of the Jews. They went out against the sophistication of the Greeks. They turned that world upside down and inside out for Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit of God was in them. When I preach I am not dependent upon my oratory. I am not dependent upon my

logic. I am not dependent upon my illustrations. I am not dependent upon my power of persuasion, good or bad as any of that may be. I am dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, do you know what the world needs to hear? They need to be convicted of sin—the curse, of righteousness—the cure, of judgment—the condemnation, if they don't receive the cure. Right? Sin, righteousness, and judgment, that's what the world needs to hear and it is not my job to do that. Every now and then some businessman will come and put his arms around my shoulder and say, “Hey, you would have made a good salesman, but come to think of it,” he says, “that's what you're doing now, you're selling religion.” I am not. I wouldn't cross the street to sell religion. Brother, I am preaching the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and I'm not trying to sell you anything. I am declaring truth. The Holy Spirit of God is here to convict you and if He doesn't convict you there's nothing I can do. All I can do is to make certain that my heart is right with God and that I am filled with the Holy Spirit of God. There's nothing between my soul and the Savior. And, Jesus said, “...*It is expedient for you that I go away...*” (John 16:7) because when I go away I'm going to send the Holy Spirit. And, when it comes to you He's going to convince, convict, and reproof the world of righteousness and of judgment to the degree that we as a church are Spirit filled. And, to the degree that we pray for one another and to that degree the people who come among us are going to be convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit of God has been sent to release the power of Jesus through us. I want that to happen. You know, I thank God that every Sunday—week by week—we see fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty people make decisions for Jesus but I am convinced that we ought to be seeing two, three, or four hundred every Sunday saved. I'm not exaggerating one little bit. Every Sunday we ought to see three and four hundred people coming to Jesus. Say amen. I mean, you think about it. You think about the number of staff members, you think about the number of deacons, you think about the number of Sunday school teachers, and you think about the number of members in this church. Every Sunday we ought to see three or four hundred people come to Jesus Christ and friend, they will when we let God's dear sweet Holy Spirit of God have his way in our hearts and in our lives. I long for it. I want God's revival power to come upon us in great manifestation. The Holy Spirit of God is the secret. He restores the presence of Jesus in us. He represents the person of Jesus to us. He recalls the promises of Jesus for us. He releases the power of Jesus through us. Thank God for the ministry by the Holy Spirit of God. I

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. Now, He cannot do these things

unless you allow him to be Lord. The Bible says, “...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). But, what it literally says is where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty. Have you given him the every room or every closet in your heart and in your life? I want you now to pray if you are where you are can slip down on your knees and you can pray. But, I want you to get in an attitude of prayer and I'm going to get on my knees and I'm going to pray. I want us to pray together. I want us one more time though we've done this before to yield our hearts—our lives corporately and individually—to the Holy Spirit. I mean, if you can get on your knees then just slip down and get on your knees. I don't expect some of you elderly people to do it. I don't expect some of you ladies to do it. But, folks in the band, you just lay your band instruments aside. People in the choir, I want you to get down on your knees. I want us to do business with God. I want us to say to the Holy Spirit of God tonight, “Oh, spirit of the living God I want you to fill me anew and afresh. I want you. I want you to represent Jesus to me. I want you to take the things of Christ and make them real to me. I want you to recall the promises of God to me. Help me to remember the things. I want you to release the power of Jesus through me. O God, do it.” Now, heads are bowed and eyes are closed and wait God's people right now just to pray. We're going to take three or four minutes and I'm not going to be talking any more. You're just going to be praying. And, after we've had a time of prayer I'll call us back together. You just pray right now in your own way to the Lord.

A Place Called Heaven

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 25, 2001

Main Scripture Text: John 14:1–3

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

JOHN 14:2–3

Outline

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- II. The Saved Go to Heaven Immediately upon Death
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Conclusion

Introduction

John chapter 14. The dear Lord Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also.”

I had a picture of Dr. Lee up there. Dr. Lee is in heaven. I visited Dr. Lee, former pastor of this church, many times at his bedside. Just before he died, he lapsed into a coma, and had a vision of heaven. He came back. This is what he said. He said, “I’ve preached on heaven many times, but I never did it justice.” Now, if there were ever an eloquent and a gifted preacher, it would be Dr. Robert G. Lee. If he had any great sermon—and he had many—his sermon called ‘A Place Called Heaven’ was a classic, but he said, “I never did it justice.”

Now, we’re limited in our knowledge of heaven. Dr. Lee was limited. I am limited. You are limited. The Bible tells us more about what will not be there than it does about what will be there. But may I say this: that the Bible gives us all that we need to know about heaven, and what we know leaves us in breathless wonder.

Now, God has purposely kept back some things about heaven from us. When the apostle Paul took his sojourn into heaven, he went to heaven, he said, I don't know whether I was in my body or out of my body, but I went up, I was caught up into paradise, into the third heaven, and he said, I saw there things, unutterable things, things not lawful to declare. That is, God said, This is a sacred secret, Paul; you cannot tell it. God has saved something very wonderful for us, the place called heaven.

The Gallup people did a poll. They found—would you believe?—that 72 percent of the American people believe in heaven. Sixty percent believed in hell. Only four percent thought they were going to hell. They believe—people believe—in heaven, but there's an old gospel song, an old Negro spiritual, that says, everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain't going there.

I talked to a man one time, one of the most important figures—I don't want to tell you his name, but you may figure out who he was, former governor of a state, served on the staff of the presidency of the United States and a very important man, who was running himself for the presidency of the United States. I was with Jim Kennedy—Jim Kennedy—that wonderful pastor in Fort Lauderdale who began Evangelism Explosion.

Jim Kennedy asked this man this question. He said, "Governor, if you were to die and to stand before the Lord, and he would ask you this question, Why should I let you into my heaven, what would you say?" I never will forget—it was almost humorous. That man drew himself up—he had that silver hair slicked back like that; that chin—he said, Well, I haven't been all that I ought to be, but I'd tell Him, If you've got anybody up there, you ought to let me in—so full of self-assurance and pride, but not one word about the grace of God. Not everybody talking about heaven is going to heaven.

We're going to be thinking a little bit about heaven. I want to give you some facts about heaven.

I. Heaven Is a Real Place

Fact number one: heaven is a real place. I appreciated what Brother Jim had to say about being a real place. Heaven is not a condition, a state of mind, some will-o-the-wisp. Heaven is some place on God's map.

Now, let me give you a scripture concerning what the apostle Paul said about his journey to heaven. In 2 Corinthians 12, verses 2 through 4, Paul said, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell."

Now, Paul is talking about himself. He calls himself a man in Christ. Now, listen to this—listen carefully. He said, whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know. That's very, very important, because that tells us you can go to heaven out of your body, or you can go to heaven in your body.

Heaven is such a real place that it takes care of a real body. Or yet, you can go there in your spirit. So Paul says, I don't know whether I was in my body or out of my body. God knoweth. "Such a one caught up into the third heaven. And I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell. God knoweth. How he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

Now, it's very interesting. We say heaven is a real place, and in the Bible we talk of heaven as being up. The apostle Paul said, I was caught up into heaven, and so those who are naysayers, those who laugh at us who believe the Bible literally, they say, Well, you ignoramus, don't you now that the earth is round, and so, if Paul is in Palestine, he's pointing to heaven, this way is up, and somebody perhaps in Australia is pointing, this way is up, and they're pointing in different directions? Don't you understand that the people in the Bible times thought the earth was flat, but we know it's round? How can heaven be up, if it's in different directions? Well, I tell you I think that God understands it all.

Let me tell you this, folks: there's one place on the face of the globe that is always up, and do you know what it is? It's north. Now, it's not by accident that, no matter where you are on planet Earth, people say down south, up north. Why? Because north is a fixed position. If you were to take a camera and open the lens of that camera, and put that lens on the north star, and leave the lens open, you would see all of the other stars rotating around that North Star, and it would never move. That is a fixed position. I believe the Bible teaches that heaven is north.

Let me give you some scriptures. Isaiah 14, verses 13 and 14—this is talking about the fall of Satan from heaven: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne"—now, watch this—"above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north." Satan says, I'm going above the stars; I'm going to the place of God; I'm going to exalt my throne there in the sides of the north.

In the Bible, when God was telling people how to make a blood sacrifice in the book of Leviticus—Leviticus chapter 1, verse 11—talking about killing the animal, and he says this: "And he shall kill it on the side of the altar—on the side of the altar,"—now, listen to this—"northward toward the Lord." Northward toward the Lord—Leviticus 1, verse 11.

Listen to this—Psalm 76, verses 6 and 7—God is talking about where promotion comes from, and he says, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge." What is the inference? Promotion comes from God. Where's God? In the north.

You see, Paul said, I was caught up into the third heaven. What does he mean by

the third heaven? Well, there are three heavens. The Bible speaks of the fowls of the heavens—that's the atmospheric heaven. And then, the Bible speaks of the stars of heaven—that's the stellar heaven. And then, God speaks of heaven, which is the abode of God—somewhere a real place that God could've gone to in a body, and, by the way, Jesus is there in a body. There's a man in the glory. Somebody said of these three heavens: the first we see by day; the second we see by night; the third we see by faith. I love that.

Heaven is a real place. Now, don't get the idea it's some sort of a gaseous nebulous state of mind, or something—no, heaven is a real place. One day, you'll go there in a resurrected body, and you'll have to have something to put that resurrected foot on. Heaven is a real place; it is somewhere on God's map.

II. The Saved Go to Heaven Immediately upon Death

Second thing—second thing—I want you to learn: the saved go to heaven immediately upon death. I sat by the bedside of a man yesterday, as he died—one of my dearest friends, Bob Hahn. I sat there and prayed, and wept, and sang, and gave God glory, as dear Bob took his last breath and then stepped into glory. Listen to this scripture—2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 6 through 8. Paul says, “Wherefore, we are always confident,”—boy, I love that, so bold—“knowing that while we are at home in the body,”—your body is a house; you live in it—“we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,”—that is, his literal presence—“for we walk by faith and not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing, rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” That's the reason I said, you can go to heaven in a body or out of the body. You can be absent from your body and go to heaven, but you can go to heaven in a resurrected body.

The saints go immediately to heaven upon death. Some people think that the soul sleeps in the grave to await the resurrection. No, the body awaits the resurrection; the spirit goes immediately to be with Jesus. What did Jesus tell that dying thief on the cross? Jesus said, “Today—today—you will be with me in paradise.” As Jesus bowed his head and died, He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

When Stephen, that saint, was stoned and martyred for his faith, he looked up, he said, I see heaven, I see Jesus on the right hand of the Father, and then he prayed, Father, receive my spirit.

Not so long ago, I was at the deathbed of my darling mother. I wish you could have known my mother. My mother was an incredible individual, as was my dad. My mother had a great sense of humor, and my mother was full of witticisms, and you could never get ahead of her; no matter what you'd say, she always had a comeback.

But I can remember there as my mother was taking her last breath—she lived into

her nineties; both my parents lived into their nineties. I expect to live a long time too, I hope—but anyway, I saw my mother there, the last few moments of consciousness, and I saw her as she just turned her eyes and looked upward. I can't prove it, but I just have a feeling that she was looking into another world. There just comes a time—there comes a time—when we move out of this body, and we move into a position with our Lord in heaven. And so, I have a desire to depart and be with Christ—that's what the apostle Paul said.

III. We Will Know Our Loved Ones in Heaven

Now, here's the third thing I want to say about heaven: heaven is a real place. The saints go to heaven immediately when they die. To be absent from the body is to be present from the Lord. The third thing about this is a question often asked: Will we know our loved ones? We will know our loved ones. We'll know them face to face.

First Corinthians chapter 13, verse 12: "For now we see in a glass darkly." What does that mean—in a glass darkly? Well, in Bible times, they didn't have mirrors like we have with quicksilver on them. They would take brass and they would polish it. Now, the translators called it a glass, but it wasn't really even a glass. It was a burnished brass reflector. They would look in it, and you could see, but you could not see as clearly as we see. That's what he meant when we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now, I know in part; then I shall know even as also I am known."

You see, folks, we really don't know one another now. The question is, not will we know one another in heaven; the real question is, Do we know one another now? You know, when Samuel was going to anoint a king for Israel, God told Samuel, "Look not on his countenance nor on the height of his stature,"—talking about Eliab—"for I have refused him. The Lord seeth not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart." You know, some of these high and mighty people that have all of these beautiful bodies and chiseled features and everything: don't think they're more important. Listen. God looks on the heart. God looks on the heart. God doesn't see as a man sees.

Will we know one another in heaven? Of course we will know one another in heaven. I thought about the picture of our little baby Philip that Joyce showed, I thought about little Joy Minor, and my heart went to that passage of Scripture where King David had a baby that died and went to heaven. He prayed, and he asked, Lord, please spare the life of the baby, but God did not. Then the Bible says, in 2 Samuel chapter 12, verse 20, "Then David rose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshiped. And then he came to his own house, and when he required, they sent bread before him and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and

weep for the child while it was alive, but when the child was dead thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead,”—listen to this—“wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him. He shall not return to me.” I will go to him.

Now, we go to our loved ones in heaven. The apostle Paul is talking about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and one of the things that he was telling the church at Thessalonica is, you can look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus, and our being gathered, not only to meet the Lord, but to meet one another. Put this verse down—1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 16: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first.” That’s talking now about the body that’s in the grave. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...”—now, listen to this—“caught up together...”—that’s Paul’s emphasis—“caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Again, he told them in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 15, it speaks of Jesus who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Now, if you think of the saints in the Bible, when they died, how does the Bible talk about the saints dying? It talks about them going to be with their people.

When Moses died, here’s what God said to Moses: “Get thee up into the mountain and die in the mountain, and be gathered unto thy people.” Now, Moses’ mother, that mother that made him that little ark, He said, Moses, go see your Mama. Get up into the mountain; be gathered to your people. Abraham knew that he was going to have a family reunion. Genesis 25, verse 8: “Then Abraham gave up the ghost,”—that is, he yielded up the spirit. I watched that yesterday, as a man gave up the spirit—“and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.” Listen to what the Bible says about Isaac—Genesis 35, verse 29: “And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days, and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.” Listen to what the Bible says about Jacob and his family reunion in heaven—Genesis 49, verse 33: “And when Jacob made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.” Now, his body is still somewhere smoldering in the grave, but he is gathered with his people. He is with his people.

That’s what Jesus talked about: a family reunion in heaven. In Matthew chapter 8 and verse 11, here’s what Jesus said: “And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” They’re going to fellowship there with these people. We’ll know them. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus was transfigured, we just had a

preview of heaven when He's up there on the Mount of Transfiguration. Elijah was there. Moses was there. The disciples had never met Elijah, they'd never met Moses, they were from a different era; but they recognized Moses, they recognized Elijah. We will know one another in heaven. Put it down big, plain, and straight.

IV. There Will Be Joyful Activity in Heaven

Number four: there will be joyful activity in heaven. There are some myths about heaven. One of the myths is that we're going to wear a wooly robe with a halo, sitting on a fluffy cloud, and pluck a harp. You know, I mean, heaven's going to be so boring, and all day long we'll have to listen to anthems. And there'll be music in heaven, but I'll guarantee you it won't be boring music. It wasn't boring this morning—wasn't that great music this morning? Thank God for the music about heaven. I love to hear it—yeah, give them a hand, that's wonderful. Heaven is rest, but it's not laziness. It's not just lolling around for all eternity. Adam had work to do before sin ever came into the garden, but it wasn't labor, it wasn't by the sweat of his brow; it was to dress the garden, to keep it.

Put this verse down—Luke chapter 19. Our Lord is talking about what we're going to do in heaven. Luke chapter 19, beginning in verse 12: “And he said, “Therefore, certain noblemen went into a far country”—this is a parable, and Jesus himself is the nobleman—“to receive for himself a kingdom and returned.” Our Lord has gone to receive a kingdom; He's coming back. “And he called his servants and delivered unto them ten pounds, and said, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded his servants to be called unto him to whom he had given the money that he might know how much each man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound has gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well done, good servant. Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound has gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.”

Now, I want to go no deeper into this except to tell you that our Lord has gone to heaven; He has given us certain abilities and certain things that we are to be made stewards of. He says, Occupy till I come. That doesn't mean, take up space. An occupation is what you do. He says, Get busy!

Come again! I'm going to reward you, and I'm going to reward you according as your labor should be, and you're going to serve me. You know, we're going to help our God rule the vast universe. Paul said, If we suffer with Him, we also reign with Him. Here's a great verse I love from the Book of the Revelation, chapter 7, verse 15—the apostle

John had a glimpse into glory, and he saw the servants of God, and here the way he described them: “Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple.” They serve Him day and night. The greatest joy that I have is serving the Lord. What a privilege to serve the Lord. Sometimes I wish I could serve Him better.

I always enjoy music. I love music, and I have a little bit more taste and ability in music than sometimes I let on. What some of you don’t know, I can kind of sit at a piano and play by ear. I won’t do that in a service, but I love music. Somehow, I have difficulty getting it out. I can carry a tune; I just can’t unload it. But I’m telling you, when we get to heaven, guess who’s going to be leading the choir: not Whitmire, Rogers! You know how I know that? Because the last will be first. Friend, we’re going to serve God in heaven. It’s not going to be boring. It’s going to be thrilling. It’s going to be blessed. It’s going to be joyful activity in heaven.

V. Heaven Will Be a Place of Absolute Perfection

Number five: heaven is going to be a place of absolute perfection—absolute perfection. As I said in the introduction to this message, we know more about what will not be in heaven than we do what will be in heaven: no more tears, no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying, no more pain, for the former things are passed away.

That’s the reason the apostle Paul said, in Philippians chapter 1, beginning in verse 21, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die”—listen—“is gain.” To die is gain. Then he said, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” Gain. No more sin, no sorrow, no suffering, no death, no disease, no doubt. What is heaven? Heaven is the presence of all that is good; heaven is the absence of all that is bad.

Let me tell you what heaven is. Heaven is all that the loving heart of God would desire. Can you imagine someone who loved you so much He gave His Son to die for you? That’s love, isn’t it? “Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his Son.” Heaven is all that the loving heart of God would desire. Heaven is all that the incredible mind of God can conceive. And heaven is all the almighty hand of God can create. Put it together—God’s love, God’s mind and God’s power—friend, that’s heaven. No wonder Paul said, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them which love him.” I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, he says, which is far better. I’m not a Greek scholar. I was exposed to Greek—it didn’t take. But I’m going to tell you this: the Greek language says it is far, very much far, much more better. He’s adding superlatives upon superlatives, when he’s talking about going to heaven.

Heaven is a place of absolute perfection. You think of God’s creative genius in this world. This world has been marred by sin, and yet you go look sometime at a mountain

range, or sometimes look into the face of a buttercup, or see the God that sculpted the rose, the God that painted the rainbow, a God that gives us these glorious sunsets, the God who crafted the delicate wing of the butterfly, even in a world that's marred by sin you can see a glimpse of that glory.

But heaven will be the consummate work of God's creative genius. You will love heaven. Many questions that a four-year-old can ask about heaven none of us can answer, but I'm telling you, friend, that heaven is a place of absolute perfection. Why? Because Jesus said, I go and prepare a place for you.

Every preacher that preaches on heaven tells and retells this story of a little girl who was blind and had never seen. But a surgeon believed that he could give sight to that child. The parents were willing. They did the surgery. The eyes were bandaged. There came that time when the bandage was to be removed. Would she be able to see? They unwrapped the gauze, took those pads from those precious little eyes, and the doctor said, Sweetheart, open your eyes. This little girl opened her eyes and blinked. The first thing she saw was the face of that doctor, then the face of a nurse, then the face of her mother. She saw a tear for the first time in her mother's eye, and she said, I can see. And she looked around at the things in the room that you and I take for granted, and then she went to the window and looked outside. She didn't see the grass; she saw the green grass. She didn't see the sky; she saw the blue sky. She didn't see the flowers; she saw the multi-colored flowers. She ran back to her mother, squeezed her mother, said, Mama, Mama, it's beautiful. Oh, Mama, it's beautiful. Mama, why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful? That mother, through tears of joy, said, Sweetheart, I tried to tell you, but you had to see it for yourself. You know, I think, when we get to heaven, we'll say something like that to our heavenly Father. Father, why didn't you tell us heaven was so wonderful? He'll say, Well, I tried to tell you. I took the things that you value—streets of gold, walls of jasper, gates of gold—those are just symbols of greater glory, greater things, things that eye cannot see nor ear hear nor heart conceive of. What is heaven going to be like? Heaven, friend, is a place of absolute perfection.

VI. Jesus Is the Crowning Glory of Heaven

Now, here's the next thing about heaven, and Jesus—Jesus—is the crowning glory of heaven—Jesus is the crowning glory of heaven. Heaven to me is not primarily a place; heaven is a person. Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you,"—now, listen to this: what's the purpose of a place—so we can live there? No—"that where I am, there ye may be also." I'm looking forward to being with Jesus, are you?

Listen. If you're not looking forward to being with Jesus, if you're just waiting for an eternal vacation or something like that, you're not going to heaven—you're not going to heaven. It's where He is! You know, when I go off on a trip, and I come home, what do

you think I do—burst through the door and run over and hug the lamp? Good lamp. There's a nice recliner; oh, good to have my recliner; oh, look at our rugs. No, it's Joyce I want to get in my arms. You see, home to me is Joyce, where she is. And that what makes my home home. What makes heaven heaven? J-E-S-U-S—to be with Jesus.

One of the great prayers that Jesus prayed is John 17, verse 24. He is praying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me." Do you have a loved one who's sick, and you're praying, God, O God, don't let them die? Well, it's all right to pray that prayer, but I want you to understand there's somebody else who's praying also, and it's Jesus. You know what Jesus is praying? "Father, I will they also whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory." Look, friend. If your loved one steps over into the place of Jesus to behold His glory, do you think that's bad? No. Listen. To be face to face with Christ my Savior, it will be worth it all, when we see Jesus.

VII. Only the Redeemed Are Going to Heaven

I've got to just cut to the last point, and very quickly. Only the redeemed are going to heaven—only the redeemed are going to heaven. As I said earlier, you have to be heaven-born to be heaven-bound. What do you mean, heaven-born? Well, the Bible says, when you've been born again, the literal language of that is to be born from above. You've had an earthly birth; you need a heavenly birth. And, if you're heavenly born, you'll be heavenly bound. Heaven-born, you'll be heaven-bound.

Let me give you a couple of scriptures; I'm coming to the end—Revelation chapter 7, verse 14. John again is in the glory. He sees this great multitude, and he asks this question—Revelation 7, verse 14: "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest who, who are these? And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Those in heaven are those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb.

I hear people strut and talk about their denomination. No denomination ever got you to heaven. Oh, I'm a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist. Are you a washed-in-the-blood Baptist? These are they who have made their robes white. I'm a member of Bellevue. Doesn't say anything about being a member of Bellevue. I'm a good person. Doesn't say anything about being a good person.

These are they who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. What does that mean? It means that you've received Christ and His atoning blood for your sin. John closes the Book of the Revelation—Revelation 21, verse 27—talking about heaven: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Conclusion

A man dreamed that he died, and he came to the portals of heaven, and he knocked on that pearly gate—just a dream—and a voice within said, Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven? What is the password? And the man said, I'm a moral man. Well, what is the password into heaven? Honesty. The voice within said, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I never knew you. Another knocked at the portals of heaven. The voice within said, Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password? This man said, I am a humanitarian. What is the password to heaven? He said, Love, charity, good deeds. And the voice from within said, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you. Another knocked, Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven and what is the password? I am a religious man. What is the password? Religion. Baptism. Church attendance. The voice within said, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you. Finally, a fourth man knocked at heaven's portals. This is all just a dream. But the fourth man said, the voice within said, Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password? And the man on the outside said, I'm a Christian. I've given my heart to Christ. I've been born again. In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. And the voice within said, Open wide the gates, and let him in, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever said, Lord, I'm not trusting my honesty; I'm not trusting my charity; I'm not trusting my religion. Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for me. I trust you. And you do that, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, you'll be heaven-born and you'll be heaven-bound, and Joyce and I will meet you just inside the Eastern Gate. Let's pray.

Now, if you're not sure that you're saved, folks, we're having Heaven Sunday so that you'll get ready. Father God, I pray today that many in this building will say an everlasting yes to Christ and be saved. How many of you say, Pastor Rogers, I know, if I died today, I'd go straight to heaven, because I've repented of my sin, I've trusted Christ, I am heaven-born and I am heaven-bound? Can you lift your hand? Thank you. Take it down.

Now, if you could not, let's get it settled right now. I want you to pray this prayer after me. Dear God...—just pray it right now—Dear God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. 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 with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. I trust you to do it right now. Thank you for doing it. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me not to be ashamed of you. You're now my Lord and my Savior, and I will live for you the rest of my life, not in order to be saved, but because you saved me by your grace. Out of gratitude, I will live for you, my God. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of these aisles all the way across the front to receive those of you who will be coming forward. There'll be a minister standing under the banner that says Redeemer to my right, and to my left over here Messiah, for those of you who are in the balcony. And, when we stand and sing, if you prayed that prayer, or you need a little more help in praying that prayer, and you want to get it settled, you want to be absolutely certain that you're going to heaven, when we stand and sing, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You come if no one else comes. You come if everyone else comes. You do what Jesus would have you to do, and we'll get it settled today, folks. You can be heaven-born, heaven-bound. Just come and say to the minister, I'm trusting Jesus. We'll rejoice, give you some Scripture to stand on, seal it in prayer. Others of you who are already saved, you need a church home. I'm going to ask you to come down the aisle at the same time, and say to the minister, I want to place my membership here. And he'll tell you how you can become a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. All be in a spirit of prayer. Let's stand together, as we sing. You step out and come on the first stanza.

Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 15, 1979

Main Scripture Text: John 14:1–3

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

JOHN 14:3

Outline

Introduction

I. The Proposal

II. The Purchase

III. The Parting

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V. The Partnership

VI. The Presentation

A. The First Responsibility: Preparation

B. The Second Responsibility: Anticipation

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles please and turn to John chapter 14—John chapter 14. The three verses that I'm going to read to you this morning are perhaps some of the best known and best loved in all of the Bible, but perhaps we'll see them this morning in somewhat a different light than we've ever seen them before. John chapter 14, the first three verses. These you will recognize, of course, as the words of Jesus: *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:1–3).

One of the most blessed truths that I know is this: that Jesus Christ may come back to this earth at any moment. And somebody has well said, “We ought to be living as though Jesus Christ died yesterday, rose this morning, and were coming back this evening,” for well indeed He might. But God chose a wedding, of all things, to illustrate that time when Jesus Christ comes again.

Now the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ was called in the Bible, figuratively and

symbolically, the bride. The Church is sometimes called in the Bible a building, a holy temple. Sometimes the Church is called the body: “*Ye are the body of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12:27). And sometimes the Church is described as a bride. And there are some wonderful truths that we can learn today as we think of the Church. That’s us, folks, as the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in order to understand this, we must understand what a wedding was like in the Middle East in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. So let me tell you how a courtship and a wedding took place so long ago.

First of all, I want to remind you that it was the groom that took the initiative. The groom would leave his father’s house and he would go to the house of that prospective bride, and there he would woo her and win her; there he would court her and tell her of his love for her. He would choose her, and there he would go and try to win her affection to himself.

Now when he had won that affection, he would negotiate with her father and pay a price for her. A groom in that day had to purchase his bride, and if she was a very valuable young lady, especially valuable, he sometimes would pay a very large price for her to her father. And after he had purchased her, and after he paid a price to her, she was then betrothed to him. And that means that she was set aside for him and she belonged to him and she was pledged to him, although the marriage was not yet consummated. They were betrothed one to another. And then, a cup of wine would come out, and both the bride and the groom, the prospective bride and the prospective groom, would drink together from that cup after a benediction of communion had been said over them and they would both drink from that cup of communion. And then after that and some other ceremonies, the groom would go away. He would go back to his father’s house, and of course, if his father was very wealthy—and they lived in what we call a patriarchal society, that is, with father rulers—and he would go back to his father’s house, and there at his father’s house he would take that portion of the inheritance that belonged to him and he would prepare a place for himself and for his bride.

Now the bride, she was waiting there at her father’s house, and while he was there preparing a place, she would be preparing a person. She would begin to sew and get her trousseau and her wedding gown, and she would collect her jewels. The Bible speaks of a bride and her wedding ornament. And she would collect all of these things that she’s going to wear in her wedding, and she was getting ready.

Now here is the difference, folks; here’s the big difference between a wedding in that day and a wedding in this day: In this day, I suppose, the one who sets the wedding day is primarily the bride, but not so in that day. In that day, the bridegroom, and sometimes the father of the groom, would set the wedding date, because it was in that day that he would prepare a huge banquet there in honor of his own dear son.

Now the bride is there at her father’s house, and she’s not knowing exactly when the

wedding is going to be. Of course, there are friends of both families who are working together behind the scenes, kind of like a surprise birthday party, to make certain the bride is not going to be caught in such a terrible situation that she could not come. But it's still a surprise to her. She is there knowing, expecting, hoping, waiting for her bridegroom to come. And then, over the river and through the woods in a torch light parade would come the bridegroom with his friends. Sometimes at night they would come, and the bride is waiting there, not knowing the exact moment, but knowing that he's coming, and knowing that he's coming soon. And there would be a runner who would run out ahead just a little ahead of the processional, and he would get near the bride's window somewhere, and he would fill his lungs with air and he would shout, "*Behold, the bridegroom cometh*" (Matthew 25:6).

Can you imagine what would go through her heart? She knew he was coming. She was expecting him. She was getting ready. But now he's here; he was literally here. The bridegroom has come. The door would burst open and he would come in and pick her up in his strong arms and carry her away back to the father's house. And there at the father's house a lavished banquet had been set, and all of the friends of the family had gathered. And here was the banquet, and here was the merrymaking, and the marriage supper would take place. And then after that marriage supper, the bride and the groom would go away by themselves wanting to be alone, off for a honeymoon, off to the bridal chambers, and stay there. And the bride would remain in seclusion for seven days and would not be seen by anyone except by her lover, her husband, her groom. And then at the end of seven days, she would again be presented to a vast assembled throng, but this time with the veil removed, and everyone could see the bride and all of her beauty, and again there would be great rejoicing.

Now I want us to apply that to this scripture that I've read to you from John the fourteenth chapter, the first three verses, where the Lord Jesus said, "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" And I want you to see the background of this passage of Scripture that it is set over against a wedding. And the Lord Jesus had this in mind, I believe, as He gave this passage of Scripture. And I want you to see the wonderful, beautiful, glorious analogy between Christ and His Church.

I. The Proposal

I want you now to think of Jesus as the bridegroom, and I want you to think of the church collectively as that heavenly bride, and the first thing I want you to notice, therefore, is the proposal. "*We love him, because he first loved us*" (1 John 4:19).

Remember what we told you that the groom would leave his father's house and come to the house of the bride? That's exactly what the Lord Jesus has done.

*Out of the ivory palaces,
Into a world of woe,
Only His great eternal love
Made my Savior go. (Henry Barraclough)*

And you see, dear friend, the groom has taken the initiative.

Why do we love Him? I'll tell you why: because He first loved us. Amen? He first loved us. *"We love him, because he first loved us."* I've said it before; I'll say it again: *He doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us.* Wonder of wonders that Jesus loves me. And so our Lord is coming, proposing His love toward us, and proposing that union between the Church and Himself, the heavenly bridegroom.

I want you to notice some scriptures here in John chapter 14. Look in verse 18. Now remember John chapter 14 and John chapter 13 are all a unit, and you don't understand John chapter 14 unless you see it in the basis of John chapter 13. Now notice in verse 18, for example: *"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen"* (John 13:18). You see, we're His chosen ones; we are His chosen bride. He chose us. And then He speaks of His love for us. If you will please, look at it there, and you'll see in John 13, verse 34: *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you"* (John 13:34). Oh, our Lord loves us with an infinite love, with an everlasting love, with an indescribable love. And so the first thing we see is what I call the proposal.

II. The Purchase

Now the second thing I want us to see is the purchase, because not only has He set His affection on us, but because He set His affection on us, our Lord has purchased us. But He didn't purchase us with silver and gold as a bridegroom would have in that day so long ago, but our Lord has purchased us with the silver of His tears and with the gold of His blood.

Again, remember that the same night that John 14 took place, John 13 took place, and in John 13 we have the institution of the Lord's Supper. And what is the Lord's Supper all about? Remember both drink, and Jesus said, in 1 Corinthians, "this cup, this testament, is my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25). Now the word *testament* means "covenant"; there is an agreement, a betrothal. Between a groom and a bride was a covenant. And Jesus said, *"This cup is the [new covenant]..."*— *"the new testament in my blood"*; that is, "I have purchased you with my blood." That's the reason Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your*

own? For ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). See, the Lord Jesus bought us, and with a price. And what did He purchase us with? With His own blood.

We sing a grand stately hymn called “The Church’s One Foundation,” and if you listen to the words of it now, it’ll make more sense to you:

The Church’s one foundation

Is Jesus Christ, her Lord,

She is His new creation

by water and the Word.

From heaven He came and sought her

To be His holy bride;

With His own blood He bought her

And for her life He died. (Samuel J. Stone)

You see? With His own blood He bought her. He came from heaven and sought her, the Church, to be His holy bride.

III. The Parting

Not only the proposal, but now you see the purchase, and now you see the parting. Now John 14 makes a little more sense, verses 1 through 3, where He says, “If ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions.” That is, “I have a wealthy Father. In my Father’s house are many dwelling places, and I go to prepare a place for you.” He’s saying, “Sweetheart, I’m going to fix up our home. I’m going to take that part of the inheritance that belongs to me and there I’m going to prepare a place, darling, for you and for me. I’m going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself.”

So there is that parting. We’re living now in that interval of time, that time from when the bridegroom left His Father’s house, came to this earth and courted us, and paid the purchase price. And now He has gone back to heaven and He is preparing a place.

You see, in this time of parting is a time of preparation—the groom is preparing a place. Heaven is a prepared place, but it is a prepared place for a prepared people. And so while the groom is there preparing a place, we are here to be preparing a person; we have a responsibility while our Lord is gone away. When I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, that means I belong to Jesus Christ and to Him alone, in the spiritual sense, and I must be true to Him, and you must be true to Him.

Can you imagine if that bridegroom—let’s go back to the physical plane, the material plane, and talk about an earthly bridegroom who has courted an earthly girl. Suppose that he’s all excited about, that wedding, and he has been back to his father’s house, and he has prepared a lovely mansion. He’s put all of that thought and all of that prayer

and all of that labor into preparing for her a place, and then he comes, and the friend of the bridegroom goes out just a little ahead, and he gives that shout, and he says, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh.”* And then he looks in the window, and there she is sitting on the couch holding hands with another fellow. Can you imagine that? I mean, he came, he courted her, he bought her, he’s been away preparing a place for her, and he comes back and finds her being untrue to him. Is that the way Jesus is going to find you? Is Jesus going to find you being a friend to the vile world?

Do you know what the Bible says in James chapter 4, verse 4? James says, *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is [warfare] with God?”* (James 4:4). Did you know that this world is a suitor that would try to win our affections away from our betrothed? And did you know that a worldly Christian is unfaithful to his Lord who has purchased that Christian, unfaithful to her Lord who has purchased her? Do you know that? Oh, we’re to be true; we are to be preparing a person, as He is preparing a place. We are in that time of parting. And do you know what Paul said? Just jot this in the margin by John 14: 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 2—2 Corinthians 11 and verse 2. Listen to what Paul said to that somewhat worldly church at Corinth. Paul said, *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:2). What is our Lord saying? He’s saying to the church at Corinth and to the church at Memphis: “Be pure, be clean, keep yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

You see, in the biblical days, the bride would wear a white gown. Do you wonder why brides wear white gowns today? Somebody said white is a symbol of joy—that’s why they wear a white gown. And the groom said, “Why do I wear a black tuxedo?” No, white is not primarily a symbol of joy. It is a symbol of righteousness. Turn to Revelation chapter 19 for just a moment—Revelation chapter 19—and let’s look in verses 7 and 8: *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come,”*—who is the Lamb? Jesus—*“and his wife hath made herself ready.”* Who is the wife? The Church. And notice in verse 8: *“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”* (Revelation 19:7–8). And this is better interpreted, “the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

Now actually, the bride’s dress was an inner garment and an outer garment. That inner garment is that robe of righteousness that Jesus Christ gives us:

*Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne. (Edward Mote)*

But there’s another garment that we ourselves prepare, and that is our righteous acts. I tell you, some of you are going to be dressed, or should I say, some of us, perhaps, are going to be dressed rather shabbily, if we don’t change our righteous acts. The

righteous acts are the deeds that we do because we've been born again.

Now I know what some people are saying. They're saying, "Oh well, I've been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and therefore I'm ready to meet Him." But do you know what the Bible says? "*Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear; we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*" (1 John 2:28). Some of you are not going to have much of a trousseau when the Lord Jesus Christ comes. I've told people before, and I'll say it again: *If your religion hasn't changed your life, you ought to change your religion.* Listen. This thing of being a Christian is an inward righteousness that culminates in an outward righteousness and so there is the parting: the groom is preparing a place; the bride is preparing a person.

IV. The Proclamation

But let's go back. The next thing I want you to notice is not only the parting, but the proclamation. What is the proclamation? The proclamation is the shout, "*The bridegroom cometh.*" Notice again here in John 14 Jesus says in verse 3, "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.*" No ifs, ands, buts, and doubts about it, Jesus is coming again, folks. He is. The same Jesus Christ who walked the shores of Galilee is coming again. The same Jesus who broke the loaves and fed 5,000 is coming again. The same Jesus who opened the doors of the morning and floods the world with light is coming again. The same Jesus who pulls down the shade of the evening and pins it with a star—that same Jesus is coming again. The Jesus who died on the cross is coming again. Jesus, who rose from the grave and pulled the sting from death, is coming again. Jesus is coming again. He said so. He said so. Truth incarnate said so. He said, "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.*"

You say, when is He coming? I don't know, and you don't know. He said, "*In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*" (Matthew 24:44). Sometimes when we preach on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, someone says, "I've heard that before; preachers have been saying that before." Yes, they have, because it's true. And you say, "Well, He didn't come the other time when someone said He's coming soon. I don't think He's coming now." Well, if you don't think He is, that's the best sign that I know of that He well might, for the Bible says, "*In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*" I mean, suddenly, just like that, with a shout, He's coming, and we're going to hear that shout. And I don't know when we're going to hear it, but we're going to hear it. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 16, "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*" (2 Thessalonians 4:16).

Say, I want to ask you a question. Suppose this sermon were interrupted with a shout and a voice of the archangel; suppose it were interrupted that way. And suppose

our Lord were to say, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh,”* I mean, without you having a chance to say yes to Jesus Christ. Suppose, I mean, right now—would you be ready? Would you? If not, why not? Why don’t you get ready? This service is God’s way of helping you get ready for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus. Can you imagine the joy and excitement of an earthly bride so long ago? Oh, friend, what rapture, what joy, what delight, what thrill, when those who know the Lord Jesus hear that glad shout!

V. The Partnership

Now the next thing I want you to notice is not only the proclamation—*“I will come again”*—but I want you to notice also the partnership, for Jesus says here in this verse: *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,”*—now listen to this next phrase—*“and receive you unto myself.”*

Now friend, the exciting thing about heaven is not the house of many mansions, not the streets of gold and the gates of pearl; it is our union with Jesus Christ. He is coming to receive us unto Himself. You see, we walk by faith and not by sight now (2 Corinthians 5:7), but one day, faith will turn to sight, and hope will turn to reality, and we’ll know the Lord in the way we don’t know Him. It’s wonderful being a Christian now, but friend, there’s a difference—it is the difference between being betrothed and being married; it is the difference between that time when that bridegroom came and proposed to that girl and paid a price for her and went away and the time when he came back and took her to be with him forever and that marriage is consummated in its fullness.

You see, the relationship of Jesus Christ and the Church is likened unto a marriage. Look, if you will, please, in Ephesians chapter 5. Turn to it—Ephesians chapter 5. Listen to it. I’m going to read verses 31 and 32: *“For this cause”—*that is, for love, for the matter of a man and a woman building a home; *“for this cause,”* marriage—*“shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife,”*—look at that: *“joined”—**“and they two shall be one flesh.”* God’s arithmetic is one plus one equals one: *“they will be one flesh.”* Now notice the next verse: *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”* (Ephesians 5:31–32).

“Now wait a minute Paul. Are you talking, Paul, about a man and wife, or about Jesus and the church?” Paul is saying both. The physical relationship and the psychological and the spiritual relationship between a husband and a wife is but an illustration of the greater spiritual relationship of Christ and the Church. You see, I suppose, marriage, when it is right, is one of the sweetest most sublime things that we know here on earth. Of course, when it is wrong, it’s very wrong. I know some people, who, rather than being married by the Justice of the Peace, were married by the

Secretary of War. But I'm not talking about that kind of a marriage; I'm talking about marriage as God intended it to be.

I want you to see what Peter Marshall had to say about marriage; it's so lovely, I want to quote it to you. Peter Marshall said, "Dearly beloved, the marriage relation, when rightly understood and properly appreciated, is the most delightful as well as the most sacred and solemn of human relations. It is the clasping of hands, the blending of lives, and the union of hearts, that two may walk together up the hill of life to meet the dawn, together bearing life's burdens, discharging it's duties, sharing it's joys and sorrows. Marriage is much more than moonlight and roses, much more than the singing of love songs and the whispering of vows of undying affection. In our day, it is by many lightly discarded, but marriage will ever remain in the sight of God an eternal union made possible only by the gift of love which God alone can bestow." And take all of the best qualities of those human marriages and blend them into one marriage: that one marriage would fail to come up to the bliss and the joy that should be ours when we become one with our Lord, when Jesus, comes again to receive us unto Himself.

Friend, let me tell you, if you think it's wonderful being a Christian now, you wait till the honeymoon begins. If you think it's wonderful knowing Jesus now, I want you to remember that, while we belong to Him, and while we love Him, and while He loves us, and while He has purchased us, the full consummation of our relationship with Jesus Christ is still in the future. Hallelujah! The songwriter said,

*Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eye;
How my full heart will praise Him for His mercy, love, and grace,
That prepare for me a mansion in the sky. (Fanny J. Crosby)*

The partnership.

VI. The Presentation

Then the last thing I want to mention is the presentation. For you remember that I said that the bride would go into seclusion for seven days—the Church is going to do this for seven years, because after Jesus Christ comes and takes away His bride, the Church, here on earth for seven years will be in a period known as the Great Tribulation where the vials of God's wrath are going to be poured out upon this earth. And Jesus said there "*shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of...time, no, nor ever shall be*" (Matthew 24:21). But the Church will be gone. We will be cloistered with our Lord Jesus Christ. We will be there with Him in a honeymoon in the skies.

But wait a minute—wait a minute. That Great Tribulation is going to end. And how is it going to end? I'll tell you how it's going to end. It's going to end with Jesus Christ

coming from heaven again, this time not for His bride, but this time with His bride; this time not coming to catch His bride away, but this time He'll come in power and great glory to rule and to reign. And the choir sang about the wilderness becoming as a rose, for I want to tell you *"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 where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more. (Isaac Watts)*

And when Jesus comes, when Jesus comes this time to rule, guess who's coming with Him? His bride. And guess who is going to rule with Him? His bride. The Bible tells us in Colossians chapter 3, verse 4, *"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"* (Colossians 3:4), the veil removed.

You know, people look down on us today. They think we're ignoramuses. They think that we're superstitious people. They call us by all kinds of names and contempt and disgust. But I want to tell you, one of these days, dear friend, our dear Lord is going to remove the veil and display His bride for all to see. We may not look like much now, but do you know what the Bible says? *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). And when Christ who is our king shall appear, we will appear with Him in glory.

Now let me tell you something, friend. In the light of all of this, there are two great responsibilities. Are you ready for them? In the light of all of this, there are two great responsibilities. Do you want me to tell you what they are? The first responsibility is preparation. The second responsibility is anticipation.

A. The First Responsibility: Preparation

Now first of all, there must be that preparation. Now how can you make preparation for Jesus Christ to come again? Well, you must receive Him as your heavenly bridegroom. That means you must trust Him as your Savior and Lord. You see, this sermon and every time the gospel is preached Jesus Christ is proposing to you. Now you say, "I've never been proposed to." You have been now. Jesus Christ is proposing to you through this sermon today. Jesus Christ is saying, "I, Jesus, take thee, sinner, to be my loving bride, and I'll be with you in sickness and in health; I will be with you in poverty and in wealth; I will be with you in time, and I will be with you for all eternity; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. I am proposing to you to be your Savior."

And what is the purpose of our being gathered together here? Well, to worship Him. But there's another purpose, and that is for those who do not know Him to say, "I, sinner, take thee, Jesus, to be my Savior, in sickness as in health, in poverty as in

wealth, to love, to honor, to cherish, to obey in time and for eternity; I say yes to you.”

Now Jesus has already said yes to you—remember, the groom takes the initiative. I performed a wedding ceremony here last night in this spot, and I stood right down there and I looked into the face of that handsome groom and I said, “Will you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?” And he said, “I will.” And then, I looked at the bride, and I said to her, “Will you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?” And she said, “I will.” Jesus has already said yes to you, and now we’re waiting for you to say an everlasting yes to Him. And if you will—if you will, dear friend—there will be something as solemn, as sacred, as a betrothal to take place: You will belong to the one who purchased you with His own blood. And when you hear the shout, “*Behold, the bridegroom cometh,*” you will be a part of that great bride made up of all kindred, tribes, and people, now to be caught up from the face of this earth to meet our Lord in the air and to go off to the Father’s house for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Say, won’t it be grand? Won’t it be grand? Don’t you be in hell when all of that is going on. God loves you. You ought to be a part, and so there is that preparation.

B. The Second Responsibility: Anticipation

And let me say, not only is there that preparation. Right along with that preparation there ought to be that anticipation. You know, people who are loving Jesus ought to be looking for Him to come again.

Wednesday night, I said that we ought to be looking for His return, we ought to living for His return, we ought to be longing for His return, our hearts ought to say with the Apostle John, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20). Don’t you want Him to come again? I do, dear friend. In the coming of Jesus is really the only hope for this world. Science has made it a neighborhood, but not a brotherhood. Only Jesus is going to be able to change this world and make it what it ought to be.

Conclusion

And when is it coming? I don’t know.

*It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,
When sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking
That Jesus will come in the fullness of glory
To receive from the world “His own.”*

*It may be at midday, it may be at twilight,
It may be, perchance, that the blackness of midnight
Will burst into light in the blaze of His glory,*

When Jesus receives "His own."

*Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying,
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying.
Caught up through clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives "His own." (H. L. Turner)*

If today, if now, this moment, we were to hear the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," would you be ready? Have you said to Jesus, "I receive you, Lord Jesus, as my Savior and as my Lord?"

Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 7, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 14:1–3

Outline

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I. The Proposal

II. The Purchase

III. The Parting

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Introduction

Be finding John chapter 14. We're going to read three of the most familiar verses in all of the Bible as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table.

One of the most blessed truths that I know is what Scott just sang: "And This Could Be the Day." Jesus Christ may come at any moment for His Church, and He chose a wedding to illustrate that fact.

John chapter 14, verses 1 through 3, our Lord Jesus, just before His crucifixion and ascension into glory, said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The Title of our message: "Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh."

Now, in order to understand this passage of Scripture, we have to understand the tradition of marriage that was in the Bible at this time. Let me tell you how weddings took place.

First of all, it was the groom who took the initiative. The groom would leave his father's house and would go to the house of his prospective bride, and there to carry on the courtship. And, he would negotiate with the father of the bride for the bride, and he would actually purchase her; he would pay a price, a purchase price, for his bride. And then, from that time on, after he had negotiated for her, and paid a purchase price for her, they were betrothed. That is, they were as good as married, but the marriage was not yet consummated. When this took place, there would be a ceremony when they

would drink both from a common cup over which a benediction had been pronounced. It was the cup of the covenant. Then the groom, after having sealed and settled the marriage, after they had been betrothed, and had drunk from the same cup, he would leave her house, and he would go back to his father's house, to prepare for them living accommodations. They know they're going to be married. The wedding will be consummated, but she does not know exactly when this will take place.

Then, upon a time, the groom would come back again to her house, and it would be usually at night, and he would be escorted by an entourage—escorts. Generally, it would be a torchlight procession, and he would come back to her house to snatch away, to take away, his bride.

While he was gone preparing living accommodations, the bride was there waiting, hoping, expecting, knowing that he would come, but not knowing the exact time. Just before he would arrive, there would be a runner who would go out in front, and he would give a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

Can you imagine her heart? Can you imagine what there is in her heart and in her life when she hears that shout? And then, he would take her, sweep her up in his arms, and carry her back to his father's house, where the guests would be assembled, and there would be a great feast, a wedding feast. And then, after the wedding feast, the bride and groom would be escorted away to the wedding chamber for the consummation of the marriage. The bride and groom would remain secluded for seven long days. And then, after seven days, they would come back again, and he would present his bride this time with her veil removed for all to see her beauty.

Now, keep that in mind, because you're going to understand something more about the Lord's Supper, and the song that Scott just sang about the bridegroom coming for the church.

Now, let's see if we can translate that to the church, because, as you know, Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride of Christ.

I. The Proposal

First of all, think of the proposal that our Lord has made to us—verses 1 through 3—Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions..."—He's talking here about having gone from His Father's house to seek a bride. Now, go back to chapter 13, and notice in verse 18. He says in chapter 13, verse 18: "...I know whom I have chosen..." Now, we love Him because He first loved us. Look in chapter 13 and verse 34, the middle of that verse. He said, "...I have loved you..." We are chosen of the Lord. We are loved of the Lord.

Now, we talked this morning about His wonderful name. I'll give you another wonder.

Wonder of wonders that Jesus loves me. We love Him because He first loved us. He chose us. He set His love upon us.

Joyce loves me because I first loved her. I don't think she would have paid any attention to me. But I saw her in school there when we were sitting there in grammar sitting, sitting off to my right about six desks up and two desks over. I couldn't study for looking at that girl and watching her. And one day I wrote a magnificent love note and dropped it by her desk. She still has that love note right now. You can't see it, but it is there. It's part of church history. Now, Joyce loves me because I first loved her. And, folks, I want to tell you, I love Jesus because He first loved me. He says there, in John chapter 13, "I have chosen you, and I have loved you."

II. The Purchase

But not only was there a proposal; then there was a purchase. The Lord Jesus bought us. He sought us, and He bought us. Now, what price did He pay for His bride? The gold of His blood, the silver of His tears! You see, the same night in which the Lord Jesus instituted the communion that we're going to enjoy tonight, the same night He gave us John 14, verses 1 through 3. And these are together. The cup of communion means that the purchase price has been paid. Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 25. When Jesus held the cup with His disciples that night, He says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." That is, we have a covenant that is a contract, a marriage contract, and that cup represented the purchase price. First Corinthians 6, verses 19 and 20—our Lord says, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which ye have of God, and you're not your own? For you are bought with a price..." We have been bought by the Lord Jesus Christ. He, the heavenly bridegroom, has paid the price for us. We sing, "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; she is His new creation by Spirit and the Word: from heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride; and with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died."

III. The Parting

And so, you see the proposal. You see the purchase. And then, you see the parting. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. Jesus has returned to His Father's house, and He is there preparing a place for us. That's what He is doing, is preparing a place for us. Now, He made the entire world and all creation in six days, and it's wonderful. He's been 2,000 years preparing a place for us; it ought to be something! That's what He is doing. He is preparing a place. What are we doing? We are preparing a person. We are getting ourselves ready for Jesus Christ to come again. While the bride was

waiting for the groom, she had two major responsibilities: one was to keep herself pure; one was to keep herself pure. Paul said to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 2: “For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” And Paul said, “I’m just watching over the flock, because when the bridegroom comes, I want you to be pure.” Don’t you want to be pure when Jesus comes? I mean, can you imagine a man who’s gone off to prepare a place for his bride to come back to her, and they’ve already drunk from the espousal cup, and they’ve made a holy covenant, and he’s purchased her, and then he comes back and finds her being unfaithful to him? That’s the reason James said, in James 4:4, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” How can we have this harlot of a world as a lover when we have been espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ?

But not only was she responsible to maintain her purity; she was also responsible to prepare her wedding garments, what the girls call a trousseau. Would you turn to Revelation chapter 19 with me for a moment, and look in verses 7 and 8, and here’s what it says: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Now, there is imputed righteousness, but this word means, literally, the righteous acts of the saints. What you are doing right now is preparing your wedding garment, what you’re going to wear when the bridegroom comes, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes. And so, here she is preparing to be pure and beautiful and spotless. And that’s what I want to be. When Jesus comes, I want to be ready to meet Him. I don’t want to be unfaithful to Him. I want to be ready. And so, there is the parting. He has gone.

IV. The Proclamation

But, next thing we’re looking for is the proclamation. That is what Scott was singing about. We’re waiting for the shout, the verse that He quoted just before he sang: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.” Jesus is coming back again with a shout. What will be shout be? “Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him.”

You know, sometimes people ask me, “Pastor, do you think the signs are fulfilled that Jesus can come again?” Friend, there never has been a time since He ascended that He may not come again at any moment. And we need to remember that: that He’s coming at any moment.

I was reading tonight even in my study, in Matthew 24 and verse 36: “But of that day

and that hour knoweth no man.” You don’t know the time that Jesus is coming. And, as Scott sang, “It may well be tonight.” Can you imagine the joy, the excitement, when she hears that shout? Just think tonight what would happen if we heard the trump, heard the shout? I’m not looking for the signs; I’m listening for the shout. Jesus may come at any moment. And so, there’s the proclamation.

V. The Partnership

And then, there is the partnership. Lo, notice the partnership. Here’s what it is. He says in verse 3: “And I go and prepare a place for you; and, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” I tell you that heaven, to me, is not made marvelous because there are gates of pearl, walls of jasper, streets of gold; it is Jesus that makes heaven heaven—“...that where I am, there ye may be also.” We’re going to be with the Lord Jesus. You see, we’re betrothed to Him now, and that is wonderful; but the full consummation of the marriage comes when Jesus Christ returns again.

Did you know that God, in order that we might understand spiritual truths, has given us material truths and material things that are a reflection of the heavenly glory? Marriage is but a reflection of our relationship with God.

For example, Ephesians chapter 6, verses 31 and 32, the Apostle Paul said, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife; and they too shall be one flesh.” And then notice this: “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” The husband and wife relationship is a picture of Christ and the church. One time I said this in a sermon, and a lady wrote me a letter, and said, “That you should say that, you should not make your relationship with Jesus Christ analogous to the relationship of husband and wife.” Friend, that’s what God has done. That’s what God has done. Now, thank God for a joyful marriage.

Peter Marshall said this: “Dearly beloved, the marriage relationship, when rightly understood and properly appreciated, is the most delightful, as well as the most sacred and solemn, of human relations. It is the clasping of hands, the blending of lives, and the union of hearts, that two may walk together up the hill of life to meet the dawn together bearing life’s burdens, discharging its duties, sharing its joys and sorrows. Marriage is much more than moonlight and roses, much more than the singing of love songs and the whispering of vows of undying affection. In our day, it is by many lightly regarded and by many lightly discarded. But marriage will ever remain in the sight of God an eternal union made possible only by the gift of love, which God alone can bestow.” I think that is beautifully written, but that is only a faint representation of the joy that we will know when Jesus comes.

Now, it's wonderful being a Christian now. But, friend, if you think it is wonderful now, you just wait till the honeymoon. You wait till our Lord Jesus Christ comes and sweeps us up in His arms, and takes us to glory, and we will experience that relationship with Him, which is unceasing in love, and increasing in joy, throughout all eternity. Again, someone has written these words: "Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face, and the luster of His kindly beaming eyes. How my full heart will praise Him for His mercy, love, and grace that prepares for me a mansion in the skies." And so, there's the partnership.

VI. The Presentation

And then, next, there's the presentation. One of these days, the Lord is going to present us to this world. We are hated, scorned, and looked down upon right now; but it won't always be that way. You remember after seven days the bride was taken, from the seven days of the hoopa, they called it, and then she is presented with her veil removed? One of these days we're going to be presented to this world with the veil removed. Put this verse down—Colossians chapter 3 and verse 4—the Bible says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." What a day that will be!

Now, what does that mean to us as we prepare tonight to take the Lord's Supper? Well, first of all, it means preparation. If Christ is coming again, you'd better be married to Him. You'd better be wed to Him. You had better have drunk from that cup of covenant. And, here, you see, every time the gospel is preached, do you know what is happening? Jesus Christ is proposing marriage to you. He is saying, "I, Jesus, take thee, sinner, to be my bride. And I do promise and covenant before God the Father and these witnesses to be thy loving and faithful Savior and bridegroom, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in faithfulness and in waywardness, for time and eternity." That's what He says to us when the gospel is preached. And what should we say to the Lord Jesus? We should say to Him, "I, sinner, take thee, Jesus, to be my Savior. And I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be thy loving, faithful bride, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, for time and eternity." There is a marriage that takes place. We are espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ. Preparation ought to be there.

Secondly, separation ought to be there. We ought to keep ourselves for Jesus alone. I remind you again of James 4:4, that says that friendship with this world is warfare with God.

And anticipation ought to be there. We ought to be living, waiting for that moment. We need to be faithful, because the shout may not be long in coming. Again, someone

has written these words: “It may be at morn when the day is awakening, when sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking, that Jesus will come in the fullness of glory to receive from the world His own. It may be at midday, it may be at midday, it may be at twilight, it may be per chance that the blackness of midnight will burst into light in the blaze of His glory, when Jesus receives His own. Oh, joy, oh, delight, should we go without dying. No sickness, no sadness, no dread, and no crying. Caught up through clouds with our Lord into glory, when Jesus receives His own.”

Conclusion

Well, when we take the Lord’s Supper, when we take this cup, it’s the betrothal cup. That’s what it represents. We’re waiting on our Savior who is gone into glory. And, one of these days, this morning at 3:37 a.m., we’re going to hear the shout, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh,” perhaps. But some time, just as real as that—just as real as that. You say, “Well, I don’t think He’s coming tonight.” Well, that’s a good sign that He might, for the Bible says, “...in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.” Now, He’s paid the price. He’s purchased the bride. He’s gone to prepare a place, and soon, and very soon, we’re going to hear the shout.

Now, the Bible says, when we come to the Lord’s Table, we do this till He come—till He come. Jim, as we prepare our hearts, let’s stand and sing a chorus. Would you stand together? Jim, come and lead us.

Six Keys to Answered Prayer

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 9, 1984

Main Scripture Text: John 14:6

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- II. Pray in the Spirit
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Introduction

Tonight, I want to speak to you on a subject that I never get tired of speaking about, a subject that you need to always hear about, and something that I need to learn continually about—and that is the matter of prayer.

Now one of the greatest privileges that we have is the privilege of prayer. One of the greatest failures that we have, however, is in the area of prayer. I want to say, dear friend, that prayer is so powerful, because prayer can do anything that God can do. And God can do anything, because prayer brings God into action. I don't have a failure in my life but what somehow it's a prayer failure. There's not a sin in my life but what somehow proper prayer would have helped me to avoid it. There's not a need in my life but what if I learned how to pray and knew how to pray that need would be met.

Tonight, I want to talk to you about what I'm going to call "Six Keys to Answered Prayer." Now I just feel in my heart that, if you pray this way, according to the Scripture, God is going to hear your prayer; and, when God hears your prayer, your life is going to be blessed.

Take your Bible now, and turn to John chapter 14 and let's look in verse 6—John chapter 14 and verse 6: "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no*

man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Now many times, we assume He’s talking about salvation—and I’m certain that salvation is included. But when we come to God in prayer, we’re coming to the Father.

And the only way we can come to the Father in prayer is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He makes that plain. Look in verse 13 of this same chapter: “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*” (John 14:13–14). Turn to chapter 16, and look in verse 23—Jesus said, “*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*” (John 16:23–24).

I. Pray in the Name of Jesus

All right, the first key to answered prayer is to ask in Jesus’ name—to ask in Jesus’ name. Clearly, plainly, it is the Father that we need to reach in prayer, and the only way we can come to the Father is through the Son. Jesus said, “I’m the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). Jesus Christ brings us to the Father.

Now if you’re lost, and you ask someone directions, they’ll say, “Go down here three blocks, and turn left until you come to a red light—go through that. You’ll come to a caution light—veer to your right. Go several more blocks—you’ll see a white picket fence on the left-hand side. Turn left there, and you’ll see a circle. Swing around to the right, and go seven more blocks and through an intersection.” About that time, you say, “Hold it. Give me that again.” And then, maybe they’ll say, “Well, listen. Just follow me. I’m going that direction anyway. Just stay with me. I’ll take you there.” The Lord Jesus doesn’t just tell us how to get to the Father; the Lord Jesus is the way to the Father.

Now it’s very clear and very plain—the reason that many people, very frankly, don’t have their prayers answered is they have never been born again. And if they’re not born again, they cannot pray in Jesus’ name, because, if they’re not born again, they don’t have Christ in their heart. And if they don’t have Christ in their heart, they do not have the Savior to bring them to the Father.

A wonderful verse that you might put by these verses in John 16 is Ephesians 2:18—Ephesians 2 and verse 18: It speaks of the Lord Jesus, and it says, “*For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*” That tells us what prayer is all about: “Through Jesus we have access by the Spirit unto the Father”—by the Spirit, through Jesus, unto the Father.

So to pray *in Jesus’ name* is not a little phrase that you tack on at the end of the

prayer. And it may surprise you to know that I don't know of a prayer in the Bible that ends with this statement: "In Jesus' name. Amen." Do you? Can anybody think of one? I don't know of a one. That's not what He meant, therefore, when He said to pray in Jesus' name (John 14:13–14).

A. **Name Means Authority**

To pray in His name means three things, primarily. First of all, *name* means authority. When a man says to stop in the *name* of the law, what does he mean? Stop in the *authority* of the law. Jesus has given me the power of attorney. I can act on His behalf, and I can request of the Father those things that He wants, but for me to use His authority.

B. **Name Means Approval**

The second thing *name* means is approval. When you send out a purchase order, whoever the purchasing agent is, he signs that at the bottom, and he says, "I approve this purchase." So when we pray in Jesus' name, what we're saying is that we're praying with His authority; and, because we have His authority, we also must have His approval. Now He is not going to give His authority for anything He doesn't approve.

C. **Name Means Acclaim**

But *name* means something else: *Name* means, also, acclaim—acclaim.

For example, my Jewish friends wrote me a while back, and said, "Dr. Rogers, we want you to know that we have planted a grove of trees in Israel in your name." So somewhere—I've never seen them; I'd like to go see if they lived or died—but they planted a grove of trees in my name. What did they mean by, "We did that in your name"? Well—"We did that for your honor. We're trying to honor you; we're trying to give acclaim to your name."

So you see, when I pray in Jesus' name, I say, "Lord Jesus, I'm doing this with Your authority. I'm doing this with Your approval. And I'm doing this for Your honor." Do you pray that way? You cannot pray for Jesus' honor, and you cannot pray with His authority, and with His approval, unless you are born again.

So the very first key to answered prayer is that you must learn to pray in the name of Jesus. That's the first key to answered prayer—to pray in the name of Jesus. And to pray in the name of Jesus you have to have Christ in your heart as your Lord and Savior.

II. **Pray in the Spirit**

Second thing: Not only pray in the name of Jesus, but the second is that you must pray

in the Spirit—in the Spirit. This time, turn, if you will please, to Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18—Ephesians 6 and verse 18. Here, the Apostle Paul is giving us a marvelous lesson on prayer, and he says, *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”—“in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:18). First of all, we pray in the name; and now, we pray in the Spirit.

You see, the Holy Spirit is called, in the Bible, “the Spirit of prayer.” Did you know that? In Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, the Holy Spirit is called, *“the spirit of grace and of supplications”* (Zechariah 12:10). So it is so important, therefore, that you not only be saved, but that you be Spirit-filled.

Now a person can be saved and still not be praying in the Spirit. If you just automatically pray in the Spirit when you’re saved, then the Bible would not command us to pray in the Spirit. So when the Bible commands us to pray in the Spirit, of course, we have to admit the possibility that we could be a Christian and yet not be praying in the Spirit.

And in the Book of Jude—there’s just one chapter, so I’m not going to give you a chapter, just the verse—in Jude verse 20, the Bible says this: *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost”* (Jude 1:20). So the Bible tells us to pray in the Spirit.

Why is it so important to pray in the Spirit—that is, to be yielded to the Holy Spirit? Well, Paul makes it clear.

A. Because of Our Weakness

In Romans chapter 8 and verse 26, Paul explains why we must pray in the Spirit. And this is what he says: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities...”*—anybody here weak? Anybody here infirm? Well, hallelujah! You have a helper—*“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).

Now this verse is very interesting, because the word *help* has a double prefix in front of it, or in conjunction with it, and it means, “instead of,” and, “together with.” It almost sounds contradictory that the Holy Spirit prays instead of us and then the Holy Spirit prays together with us. What does that mean? Well, it’s very beautiful, when you think about it. It means that we cannot do it without Him, and it means that He will not do it without us. It is the Holy Spirit that so fills us when we pray—when we’re surrendered to Him, when we’re in the Spirit—that He molds our prayers and makes our prayers acceptable to the Father.

To *help* means that He inspires our prayers, He guides our prayers, He energizes

our prayers, and He sustains our praying. We're so weak that, without His help, we would not get it done. And as a matter of fact, the Bible says that He does it "*with groanings*" (Romans 8:26). That speaks of sounds that are uttered at childbirth. "The pains of childbirth" is literally what that word means, when He "makes intercession for us with groanings." Hallelujah for the Helper!

I tell you, dear friend, prayer is hard work. The devil will attack you when you pray; your mind will get clouded when you pray. And hallelujah for the Helper! Have you ever tried to pray without the Spirit? If you have, you'll understand how important it is to pray in the Spirit of God.

B. Because of Our Ignorance

Pray in the name; pray in the Spirit—not only because of our weakness, but also because of our ignorance. Folks, listen. We don't know what we should pray for, as we ought. Listen to Romans 8:26 again: "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.*" We can't pray for every possibility.

Just a few moments ago, Paul handed me a slip of paper, and someone said, "Pastor, pray for this particular situation." Well, during the song service, I bowed my head and prayed for that particular situation, lest I forget it. But I tell you, I cannot pray for everything; you cannot pray for everything. And I believe that the Holy Spirit of God makes prayer assignments to us.

And I've said before, and I want to say again—*for your* prayer *to be* effective, *your prayer must be* selective. You can pray in general—"God bless the world." But dear friend, when you get down to specific praying, the Holy Spirit of God gives you that prayer assignment; and, not only does He tell you who to pray for, but also He tells you how to pray for whom you pray. Or, if He doesn't tell you, then He'll just make groanings for you—words that you can't utter.

For example, there's a sick saint. Let's suppose that your grandmother is 80 years of age, and she's sick; and, you're starting to pray. Well, what are you going to pray? "Lord God, heal her." Or, "Lord God, bring her to Heaven." Huh? That's kind of hard, isn't it, to know what to pray?

Well, God knows what to pray, and you know, many times, it's God's will to take her to Heaven. As a matter of fact, that's the more wonderful thing—if God takes her to Heaven. Have you ever noticed that we get in prayer meetings on Wednesday night, and so many times we spend so much more time praying for the saved who are sick than the unsaved who are lost? *We spend more time trying to keep the saints out of Heaven than the lost out of Hell.* Do you ever think about it? Because we are just not burdened for the unsaved, many times, as much as we are burdened for the saved.

But how do we pray? Suppose there's a troublemaker in the church. I mean, let's just suppose that, in this church, somebody just made up his or her mind they were going to cause trouble in the church, and we begin to pray about it. Well, how would we pray? Many of us might be praying, "Lord, remove him." As a matter of fact, some of us might be saying, "Lord, fix his wagon." But I think about the Apostle Paul, when the Apostle Paul wrought havoc on the church. Those early saints prayed—I suppose some of them might have been saying, "Lord, strike him dead." But the Lord struck him alive. The Lord just saved him and made a mighty apostle out of old Saul, who later became Paul.

Many times, we don't know what to pray for. But here's the wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit takes our prayers—and even sometimes when we ask for the wrong things with the right heart—then He takes the right thing and applies it to the right heart.

He is like a transformer. That electrical energy goes into the transformer on one side, and one cycle, and one voltage; it comes out on the other side in another form so it can be used. If you were to drop that power off those high-tension wires into your toaster, you'd toast more than the bread. But what happens is this: It goes through the transformer. It is the same power, but it is made acceptable; it is made adaptable; it is made usable. And many times, our prayer power, our energy, because it comes from a heart that is right with God, the Holy Spirit says to the Father, "Now Father, this is what he thinks he wants, but this is what he needs." Have you ever thanked God He didn't answer the prayers exactly—that He didn't give you what you wanted? He always gave you something better than you wanted.

III. Pray in Obedience

Rule number one: Pray in the name. Rule number two: Pray in the Spirit. Rule number three: Pray in obedience—in obedience. By the way, you learn that all of these things were in something: first of all, in the name; secondly, in the Spirit; thirdly, in obedience. It is foolish to pray and to ask God to answer your prayer if you are not obeying. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way" (John H. Sammis).

David knew better than to try to pray when he was disobeying the Lord. He says, in Psalm 66, verse 18: *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psalms 66:18).

Now if I'm cherishing sin in my heart... Suppose I have some unconfessed, unrepented-of sin. Let my Bible that tells me about sin represent sin. And I've got that sin right down here in my heart, and I have regard to it. Now the Bible doesn't say, "If I have sinned, the Lord will not hear me." The Bible says, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart,*

the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). Now there’s my sin, right there. We Baptists say, “Well, nobody is sinless and perfect. Everybody has his vice; this one is mine.” And so we’ve got some little sin down here in our heart. We have regard for it; we love it—“Sweet little fellow, nice sin.” And we just have regard for that particular sin. And then, we have the audacity, the nerve, to come to God, and we say, “Now God, here’s what I want You to do for me” ... “Precious sin” ... “Now God, here’s what I want You to do for me.” Do you think God is going to hear that prayer? If God were to hear that prayer, what would God be doing? God would be encouraging us to sin. How can I pray to God and ask God to do something for me, when I harbor in my heart that which nailed His darling Son to the tree?

David said, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”* (Psalm 66:18). The Bible says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). David knew better.

Isaiah knew better. Open your Bibles to the Book of Isaiah. Let me show you here—look in chapter 1, and begin to read with me in verse 13. These verses are worth turning to; they are worth marking. Isaiah is speaking to the people of his day, and he’s speaking for God. And God says, *“Bring no more vain oblations;”—*that is, “your foolish offerings”—*“incense is an abomination unto me;”—*they were burning incense in the temple. God says, *“It stinks, and it’s an abomination”—“the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.”* And listen to this: *“And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil”* (Isaiah 1:13–16).

God says, “There’s coming a time when you’ll spread forth your hands; you’ll come to church; you’ll give your offerings; and you’ll go through your programs.” And God says, “They are repugnant to me. Away with them! I don’t want it.” Dear friend, how we insult Deity when we pray without obeying the dear Lord!

Turn to chapter 59, and look with me in verses 1 and 2: *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:”—*that means, “God is not palsied, and God is not deaf”—*“but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”* (Isaiah 59:1–2).

As you ask God to answer your prayers, number one, you must ask, “Am I in the name?” Number two: “Am I in the Spirit?” Number three, “Am I in obedience? Am I obeying the Lord?”

Ezra knew better than to try to pray without being in obedience. He said, in Ezra chapter 9 and verse 6: *“And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens”* (Ezra 9:6). Ezra said, “O God, how can I look at You—how can I pray to You, dear God—for anything except repentance and humiliation, dear God? I dare not ask You anything until we get our hearts right with You.”

James knew better. James said, in James chapter 5 and verse 16: *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”* (James 5:16). David knew better; and Isaiah knew better; and Ezra knew better; and James knew better.

And John knows better. The Apostle John says, in the Book of 1 John, chapter 3, verse 22: *“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”* (1 John 3:22). I’m not saying, dear friend, that, when you obey God, you earn the answer to your prayers. It is grace all the way. But I’m saying to you that you cannot harbor unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life, and expect to have power with God in prayer.

You must pray in the name; you must pray in the Spirit; you must pray in obedience, if you want your prayers answered. Sin will keep you from praying. Prayer, however, will keep you from sinning.

IV. Pray in the Will of God

Number one: in the name. Number two: in the Spirit. Number three: in obedience. Number four: in the will of God. Your prayer must be in the will of God. First John chapter 5 and verse 14—turn to it. It’s worth turning to; it is certainly worth marking, if you’ve not already marked it in your Bible. First John is back near the end of the Scriptures—almost to the Book of the Revelation. First John chapter 5 and verse 14: *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him”* (1 John 5:14).

Now we must ask in the will of God. Well, how are we going to know the will of God? Well, in order to know the will of God, we must want the will of God. You see, to know what God wants me to do, I must want to do what God wants me to do.

If I were to walk up to you right now—I mean, point blank, face-to-face, look you right in the face—and say, “There’s something God wants you to do. I’m absolutely certain that God wants you to do it,” and you knew that I knew what God wanted you to do, and I would ask you, “Will you do it?” what would you say? Well, you’d say, “Well, I sure would like to hear what it is first.” Huh?

Now not that you're doubting me... Let's just suppose that you know that I know. Now grant it, I may not know God's will, but this is by supposition. In this case, you know that I know, and I walk up to you, as God's appointed authority, and I say to you, "There is something God wants you to do. Will you do it?" And I dare say, if I know a lot about Baptists, they'd say, "Well, tell me what it is. I'd like to hear first." Do you know what the answer should be, if you know that God wants you to do it? "Yes, I'll do it. Tell me what it is." Amen? "Yes, I'll do it. Tell me what it is."

There should be full and instantaneous obedience to the will of God even before the will of God is known, so that when God reveals it, we will do it. You see, we don't have to worry about His will; His will is best. Romans chapter 12 and verse 2 says that it is "*good, and acceptable, and perfect*" (Romans 12:2). Prayer *is not* bending *God's will to fit our will; it's not talking God into doing something that God ordinarily doesn't want to do. All prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.* The reason that many people pray and their prayers are not answered is they're not praying in the will of God.

In James chapter 4 and verse 3, the Bible says, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*" (James 4:3). The word *amiss* means that you're asking with the wrong intent. Now that doesn't mean that you cannot ask for personal needs. God's honor is fulfilled when your personal needs are met. But you cannot ask for selfish needs.

So many people have misunderstood the Bible, when the Bible says, in Psalm 37, verse 4: "*Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart*" (Psalm 37:4). Does that mean you can have anything you want? Well, yes and no. Look at it carefully. I'm not trying to say there's fine print, but His promise is not made to anyone except to the person who delights himself in the Lord.

And your delights determine your desires; and, therefore, God is safe to make this promise. "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Not the frivolous things—He will give you your heart's need, the thing that your heart desires and longs for. That's not a pink Cadillac and a swimming pool—what your heart desires, what your heart needs. A heart that is in love with God is going to have its needs met.

So many times, people say, "Well, the Bible's promises are not true." They take a promise like Matthew chapter 7 and verse 7, where Jesus says, "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (Matthew 7:7). They say, "Well, I asked, and I didn't get it. I sought—I didn't find it. I knocked—it wasn't open to me. So the Bible, therefore, is untrue." Well, friend, any text without a context is a pretext. And if you will read Matthew chapter 7, I'm going to tell you something here that's going to be astounding: It follows Matthew chapter 6. See, isn't

that profound?

Now listen. Matthew chapter 6 is a part of this whole thing. And Jesus 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). And then, He says, “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). Who? That person who is seeking God first with all of his heart. *“But seek ye first the Kingdom of God”* (Matthew 6:33).

God is not your heavenly bellboy, a glorified Santa Claus to wait upon you hand-and-foot. But when you say to Him, “O God, with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, as much as in me is, O God, I want Your will; I seek first Your Kingdom.” God says, “I’m going to take care of you, child—I’m going to take care of you.” God says, “You put My business first, and I’m going to make it My business to take care of you. And you can come to Me and ask, and I’ll hear you. You can come to Me and seek, and you’ll be found. You can come to Me and knock, and I am going to open the doors to you.”

Listen to me, dear friend. We must pray in the will of God. And the way to pray in the will of God is to be surrendered to that will, to want that will, to listen to that will, and to get in the Word of God. Jesus said, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”* (John 15:7). Why? Because now what you will and what He wills is the same, because you are in Him, and He is in you, and His Word is in your heart. and you delight yourself in Him, and you seek Him first—His Kingdom. And you find yourself not talking God into doing things that He ordinarily would not want to do, but you find yourself receiving those blessings that God has foreordained and planned for you to have.

So you must pray in the will of God—that’s the fourth thing.

V. Pray in Fellowship

Number one: in the name. Number two: in the Spirit. Number three: in obedience. Number four: in the will of God. Number five: You must pray in fellowship—in fellowship. Take the Word of God, please, and turn to Mark chapter 11 with me—the Gospel of Mark, chapter 11—and, look, if you will, in verse 25. And I am well aware that when I say, “in the name, in the Spirit, in obedience,” many of these things overlap, and I have somewhat artificially separated them out. But I do that for a purpose—so I can make individual and singular points.

Mark chapter 11, and I begin to read now in verse 25—all right, listen to what our Lord has to say here about prayer: *“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your*

trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25–26). Now if you're out of fellowship with somebody else, you're out of fellowship with the Father—that is, if you have an unforgiving spirit in your heart. You see, you have to pray in fellowship. You have to be in tune, and so many people are harboring grudges.

As we prayed this morning, so many people have bitterness in their heart and an unforgiving spirit, and they wonder why their life is so barren and their prayers are so unfruitful. Do you and your husband argue? You and your wife argue? You're not in harmony; you're not in oneness; and you're not in fellowship.

Let me give you a Scripture—1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7: *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them"*—that is, "with your wife"—*"according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered"* (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands and wives whose lives are filled with bitterness, and rancor, and arguing, and all of these things—they stop their prayers from being answered. We must pray in fellowship; we must be in harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ. How important it is that we be in harmony with one another!

VI. Pray in Faith

Now the last thing I want to say, and the very sixth of these things—not only must we pray in fellowship... Is that going to make six? If not, I'll go back and get another one. All right now, listen. Pray in faith—in faith, in faith. And by the way, praying in faith is the sum total of all of these other things. When you're in the name, when you're in the Spirit, when you're in obedience, dear friend, when you're in the will, and when you're in harmony, you're going to find, ipso facto, faith—it's going to be there. You see, faith is not something you muster up. Faith is the by-product of placing yourself where that faith can be there, in your heart.

Now listen to Matthew chapter 21, verse 22: *"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (Matthew 21:22). Pray, believe, *and you'll* receive. *Pray in* doubt—you do without. Listen. In *"all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."* Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 6: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

No prayer has ever been answered that was not a prayer of faith. No prayer of faith has ever been unanswered. Don't ever tell me that you pray in faith and God didn't hear your prayer. I won't believe it, because, friend, when God gives faith, that's a sign He intends to answer that prayer. And that's the reason 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 must pray in faith.

Sometimes, if you want an exercise that will help you to grow in faith, read books like *The Biography of George Mueller of Bristol*. Just read the answers to prayer in this dear man's life. He kept a prayer log, and I was astounded to learn that he recorded over 25,000 definite answers to prayer. Many of us will say, "Yes, I remember when God answered my prayer. When I was a little boy, one time something happened, and God answered my prayer." George Mueller of Bristol, who had an orphanage and raised literally millions of dollars, when a million, you know, was a million dollars—and, it's not a big compliment today to say, "You look like a million"—when a million dollars was a million dollars, he raised literally millions of dollars, without asking anybody. Now it's not wrong to ask, but God just led him a different way. And God would not even let George Mueller let his needs known, as he was feeding these little orphans—raised millions and millions of dollars.

Of course, who would not want to know what the secret of prayer is in this man, this great man of faith? He was asked to explain the secret of answered prayer. Do you want it? Are you ready for it? Here it is—George Mueller's answer: "Have faith in God." "Oh," you say, "I was expecting something wonderful." Friend, that's wonderful! "I was expecting something significant." That is significant. Have faith in God. We must pray in faith.

So many times, I find myself, when I'm praying, begging God, pleading with God, agonizing with God; and then, finally, it comes to me: "O God, You're waiting for me to believe You." And I just say, "Thank You, Lord." And I feel the burden gone; I feel the joy come; and I feel that, if I don't have the answer in my hand, I already have the answer in my heart. And I'm sure when George Mueller said to have faith in God, he did not put the emphasis upon the word *faith*, but he put the emphasis upon the word *God*. Have it in God. What's he saying? Oh, *it is not so much a great faith in God as it is faith in a great God*. He knew how great God was. Have faith in God.

Think about God as the One who answers, who calls upon us to pray. Oh, dear friend, there's no sense in praying without confidence. We must pray in confidence to pray in faith.

Abraham was the father of the faithful. God heard his prayer, and let me show you why. Romans chapter 4, verses 19 and 20—and this is what describes father Abraham—the Bible says, "*And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*"—listen to this now—"he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:19–20).

Did you know that faith, above all things, gives glory to God? Faith honors God; and, therefore, God honors faith. Faith is not trying to psyche yourself up into a positive feeling. Faith is not working yourself into a frenzy. Faith is just letting your heart be open to God, and letting God just dump that lump of faith there.

Conclusion

When you come to these other five steps, and if you're dealing in these other matters, these other keys—if you pray in the name, if you pray in the Spirit, if you pray in obedience, if you pray in the will of God, if you pray in fellowship with the other saints—you will find yourself praying in faith to God. God will answer your prayer. Let's bow together.

Mission Impossible

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 15, 1989

Main Scripture Text: John 14:11–12

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

JOHN 14:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Reproduce Jesus in Us
- II. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Represent Jesus to Us
- III. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Reveal Jesus to Us
- IV. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Release Jesus Through Us

Conclusion

Introduction

The Scripture that I have tonight for the ordination message, I want you to take God's Word please and turn to John chapter 14. I'm going to speak to these two men, but I'm going to speak to my own heart and to your heart, for what I have to say to these two applies to us all. And John chapter 14 and I begin in verse 11. The Lord Jesus is speaking to His disciples and He said, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." And then verse 14 that fits so well with the song the man just sang. "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Now, question. There are only two classes of people in the world – believers or unbelievers. First of all, I want to ask which class are you. Only two classes now – believers, unbelievers; saints and ain'ts. You're in one or the other. All right. Now how many believers that we have here tonight, let me see your hand. You're a believer. It looks like most of us, okay. All right. So you're a believer. Now let's go back at verse

12: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me..." Is that you so far? Describing you so far, then right? You're a believer. Got you. That's you. Okay. Now listen. "...He that believeth on me (that's what Jesus said), the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." Now does the last part of that verse apply to you? Now the first part does. You say, "Well, I'm a believer." All right now. Second question. Does the second part of that verse apply to you? That is, are you doing the works of Jesus? Oh, now, wait a minute. I didn't even ask that right. Are you doing greater works than the Lord Jesus? Now, according to this Scripture, the believer will not only equal the works of Jesus; he will exceed the works of Jesus. Now you say you're a believer. Jesus said, "If you believe, not only will you equal, but you will exceed what I do." Question: Are you equaling and exceeding the works of Jesus? Well, don't answer out loud because it'll be embarrassing. But somebody's wrong. Is it you or Jesus? I mean, something doesn't fit, does it? The Lord says, "He that believes on me (that's us), the works that I do shall he do, and greater works than these shall he do." I think what we're going to have to confess is that a lot of us are unbelieving believers. Isn't that right? I mean, something is wrong. Something doesn't fit. So what shall we do? Shall we explain the verse away? Well, that's one possibility. You know, I, I heard about a man who, ah, in a battle he said to the commander, he said, "Commander, the flag has gotten ahead of the regiment. What shall I do? Shall I bring the flag back to the regiment?" He said, "No, bring the regiment up to the flag!" Now I don't think we need to water this Scripture down till it fits our pathetic lives. What I think we need to do is to bring our pathetic lives up until they match the Scripture and bring the regiment up to the flag, amen. So what does this mean: "Greater works than these that I do shall he do, shall you do that believe on Me." Well, what does that mean - greater works than Jesus? I mean, what did Jesus do? Jesus fed 5,000 with a lad's lunch. Anybody here done anything more spectacular than that? Jesus walked on water. Anybody here walked on water? Brother Sorrell gets about ankle deep. Ah, anybody here raise the dead? Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Now what could be a greater miracle than raising Lazarus from the dead? Does Jesus mean by this verse that we will do greater miracles than He did? No! This verse does not say, "Greater miracles that I have done will you do." Now if you read it that way, you're going to get all confused. He doesn't say greater miracles. He says greater works. Now what were the works of the Lord Jesus? What did Jesus come to do? Well, fast forward to John 17 and look with me in verse 4. Jesus said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Now what was the work that God gave His Son to do? Well, the Bible says the Son of God is come to seek and the save that which is lost. Jesus did not come to work miracles. Jesus came to bring the lost to Himself. Do you understand that? That was the purpose of the Lord Jesus.

Working miracles was only incidental. Go back in John. Let's, let's just, ah, turn left in John and go back to John chapter 4 and verse 34, and let's just look at a few Scriptures here. John 4 and verse 34: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." That's what Jesus said. Jesus said, "This is my bread and butter. This is my meat and potatoes. My food is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." Look, if you will, in John chapter 5 now in verse 17: "Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Look, if you will, in John chapter 6, verses 38 and following: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Now what Jesus is saying here is, "I came to finish the work that God gave me. I came to do His will. And the will is that I bring these that are lost and I get them in a right relationship with Me so that they're going to be in that resurrection in the last days." And then look with me in John chapter 8, for example, verses 28 and 29: "Then when Je, then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself: but as the Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me; and the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please him." Now that's what Jesus came to do. Jesus did not come as the great teacher, primarily, or as the great healer, the great miracle worker. Jesus said, "The work, the works that I do shall you do, and greater than these shall you do." Now let's just go back one more time. We see what Jesus said of Himself. Let's see what Jesus says of us. Go back to John chapter 3 again and verse 21. The Bible says, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds might be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." And then look with me in chapter 6, verse 28: "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? And Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." All right. And then look with me in chapter 8 and verse 39. And forgive me for giving you so many Scriptures here, but I want you to get the thought. "Then Jesus answered and said unto them, Abraham is our father. Ah, They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." Now Abraham, ah, did not perform miracles, but Jesus said, "If you were the true spiritual descendants of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham." Now what is Jesus talking about therefore when Jesus says, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do?" He's not talking about miracles. Miracles are not greater work; miracles are lesser work. I want to show you that. Go back to John 14 where we began and look in verse 11. John chapter 14 and verse 11. Jesus wants them to believe in Him. I mean, this is the bottom line. And Jesus says, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me..." That is, just believe it

because I say so. Now He says, "If you won't accept my word for it, or else believe me for the very works' sake." That is, "If you don't believe me just at my word, then you might believe me because of these miracles that I do." But miracles are the lower basis of faith, not the higher basis of faith. Jesus says, "Believe me. If you won't take my word for it, then you can fall back to miracles." But how much more had Jesus rather you believe Him not because of miracles, but because of His word. Now let's go to John chapter 20 for a moment and look with me in verse 29. And don't worry. It'll all come together in just a moment. John chapter 20 and verse 29. Thomas has seen the Lord Jesus, but he doubted the Lord Jesus. And so Jesus had to say to Thomas, "Thomas, you don't believe I've been raised from the dead. You don't believe it's really me. So, Thomas, I invite you to reach forth your hands and put them in the nail prints in my hands. And I want you to feel the wound in my side that still remains in a resurrected body, and I want you to believe." Now Thomas saw and he believed. And verse 28 says, "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." Now I want you to notice what Jesus said to Thomas. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." Now what is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying that miracles are not greater works; they are lesser work; that Jesus is saying the great thing is to believe the word. So, therefore, how does the gospel of John end? Look, if you will, at almost at the end of John, John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Now what does all of this mean? Well, it just goes back to our text. When Jesus says, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do if you believe in me." Jesus is not talking about greater miracles. Jesus is talking about what the Father sent Him to do. And the Father sent Him to bring the lost to Himself. Miracles were only signs to confirm that Jesus was the Son of God. But the greater work is to believe in Jesus. That is the greater work beyond the shadow of any doubt. Go back with me again to John chapter 5. And I just want you to see this, so turn to these Scriptures and look with me in John chapter 5 and verse 20. Jesus said, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." Now, now, ah, ah, Jesus had already done miracles, but Jesus says, "The Father is going to show you greater works than these, that you may marvel." Well, look, if you will, in verse 21: "And as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth or giveth life to whomsoever he will." Now what is a greater work than raising the dead? A greater work is giving spiritual life, the new birth. Notice verse 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall

not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” What is a greater work than raising Lazarus from the dead? It’s leading a soul to Jesus Christ. Do you believe that? I hope you do. That’s a greater work. A greater work than raising Lazarus from the dead is leading a soul to Jesus Christ. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he was raised from the dead to do what? Die again! But, mister, when you lead a man to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, he has everlasting life! “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believed on him that sent me, hath everlasting life...” What is Jesus saying when He says, “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do?” He wasn’t talking about greater miracles. He was talking about what He came to do, the work that He finished. He is not talking about greater work in quality. His work cannot be added to. He is talking about greater work in quantity. That, when He was here on this earth, His ministry was circumscribed. It was limited. But when He went back to the glory, when the Son of man went up, the Holy Spirit came down, the Christians went out, and the lost came in in great, great numbers. Jesus, at the end of His ministry, had 120, but on the Day of Pentecost in one day 3,000 souls came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do...” Dear friend, that’s what He’s talking about. Now, to these young men who are being ordained. And, Bernie, you can thank me for that later. To these young men who are being ordained, and to all of us, what is Jesus talking about? Now how are these greater works going to be done to those of us who believe? Well, He talks about the coming of the Holy Spirit of God. Back again to John chapter 14, and I want to give you four thoughts as to why the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit has come that we might do these greater works. John 14, verse 12: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do (greater not in quality but in quantity); because I go unto my Father.” And then, if you will notice what He says in verse 16: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (and the word *Comforter* means a helper, somebody who comes alongside of you, a paraclete), I will send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” The word *abide* means to settle down, to dwell with forever. It means to dwell permanently in your heart. When He says, “I will not leave you comfortless” in, ah, verse 18, the word means I’ll not leave you helpless orphans. That’s literally what it means. “You’ll not be helpless orphans wandering around since I am gone. I am going to send the Holy Spirit to you.” Now do you men who are being ordained, and to all of us who are believers who are to do greater works than Jesus did, let me give you four reasons why the Holy Spirit is come. And, and if you will let the Holy Spirit do these four things in your heart, you’re going to find this Scripture in John 14:12 being fulfilled in your life.

I. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Reproduce Jesus in Us

Now the very first reason that God sent the Holy Spirit is to reproduce Jesus in us, to reproduce Jesus in us. Now notice in verse 16 He says, "I'm going to pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter." And then, if you will, look in verse 18. He says, "And I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Now I want to ask you a question. Who is coming, Jesus or the Holy Spirit? He says it, first of all, he says, "I, I'm going to send another Comforter." And then He says, "I'll not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Is it Jesus who is coming or is it the Holy Spirit who is coming? The answer is yes, yes. You see, the, the Greek word *another* is a Greek word that doesn't mean another of a different kind. It means another of the same kind. Now if you were riding a horse, and you said, "I'm going to get another form of transportation," and you got a bicycle, that's another of a different kind. But if you were driving a Ford and you liked it so well you're going to get another Ford, that's another of the same kind. And that's the word for another that Jesus is using here. There are two different words for another. But He uses the word *another*, which means another of the same kind. That's the word that is being using here. And so, ah, what Jesus is saying is this: "Don't worry. Don't think that I've gone away and therefore you're not going to have me with you anymore. You're going to have me with you more than ever." And that's the reason He says, look in John chapter 16 and verse 7. Look at it. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you (that means it's better for you) that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Now remember when, when Lazarus was so sick? He finally died. And Mary and Martha had sent for the Lord Jesus. And, ah, when, when Jesus finally showed up, He tarried there for those days until Lazarus was dead and his body had already begun to decay. And they scolded Him, and they said, "Master, if You had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died. If You had been here." Well, dear friend, never again will anybody have to say, "Jesus, if You had been here." You see, "It is expedient for you that I go away." Now through the Holy Spirit I want you to listen to some wonderful news. Through the Holy Spirit you have all of Jesus there is in you and with you right now. He's not up there in heaven. He says, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." In a Christian, Christ lives on earth. Our li, our responsibility is not to imitate the life of Jesus. There's, I've told you before there's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus. And if it's lived where you dwell, it'll be Jesus doing it in you. And, and He has come now to dwell in you, and He lives in you. I remember reading Stuart Briscoe, who said when he first got saved and he gave his heart to Christ and knew his sins were forgiven, he started out to live the Christian life. Boy, he said, "Man, this is easy. This is wonderful." But after a while, after he stumbled a little bit, he said, "Boy, this is not easy. This is hard to live this Christian life." And so he began to try to do the

things of God. And after a while, he said, “This isn’t easy, and this isn’t hard; this is impossible. Nobody can live the Christian life!” And he was right. And then he discovered Christ in him. And he didn’t say, “This is easy or this is hard or this is impossible.” He said, “This is wonderful. This is wonderful.” Now it is God in you, Christ in you. And I pray God, Rick, and I pray God, Bernie, that you’ll just understand that the way to do the impossible and greater works than Jesus is this: that Jesus now is in you, and Jesus is in you, and He’s the one who is doing the work.

II. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Represent Jesus to Us

Now I’ll tell you something else that the Holy Spirit is come for. Not only to reproduce Jesus in us, but to, ah, but to represent Jesus to us, to represent Jesus to us. Look in John chapter 14 and verse 26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things...” Now the word *Comforter* is the Greek word for paraclete, paracletos or cletos. And that same word is translated in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1 by *advocate*. Do you know what an advocate is? That’s just a fancy name for a lawyer. Did you know that the Holy Spirit is a lawyer? And do you know what He’s doing? Not only is He reproducing Jesus in you, but He is representing Jesus to you. You see, when you go into a courtroom, you need a lawyer to represent you. Now back in Bible times, there were lawyers. They were called paracletes; the same word that the Holy Spirit is called by. And if there was somebody in difficulty, ah, the, the head of the family or the clan was the paraclete, the one who would plead the family cause. He would guard the family name, protect the family interest. He was called a paraclete. That’s the word that Jesus is using here for the Holy Spirit. And so, what, what, what the Holy Spirit is, is here is not only to reproduce Jesus in us, but to represent Jesus to you. That is, to plead the cause of Jesus. Did you know that every Christian is related to two lawyers, two advocates? First of all, the Holy Spirit is the advocate who is representing Jesus Christ to us. He is pleading the cause of Christ. He is saying, “This is what Jesus desires. This is what Jesus deserves. This is what Jesus wants.” And the Holy Spirit is representing the cause of Jesus Christ in our lives. He’s there to plead the cause of Christ. But we have another advocate. And the other advocate is Jesus Christ Himself. And Jesus Christ is now representing us to the Father. The Bible says, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father (a lawyer with the Father), Jesus Christ the righteous.” And the devil is the accuser of the brethren. And the devil says, “Adrian, who are no good, low-down, good- for-nothing scum.” Don’t anybody say amen. He says that about me. And, ah, really, that’s about right. Well, what do I do? I just say, “Would you my lawyer, please. Just see my lawyer. If you’ve got any charges to press against me, see my lawyer.” I have an advocate with the Father. And Jesus may say, “Yes, Father, he is accusing my son down there. Yes,

Father, Adrian sinned. But You see those wounds in My hand. For those sins I died.” And He is pleading my cause to the Father. And so I have an advocate, the Holy Spirit, who is pleading the cause of Christ to me. He’s saying, “This is what Jesus wants. This is what Jesus desires. This is who Jesus is.” And He is representing the Lord Jesus to me. And then the Lord Jesus is representing me to the Father. Sounds wonderful, doesn’t it?

III. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Reveal Jesus to Us

Now, my dear friend, that’s the second reason that the Holy Spirit has come. Now the same, the third reason is this: He has come to reveal Jesus through us, through us. Look, if you will, now, ah, excuse me, to reveal Jesus to us. Look, if you will, in John 14 and verse 26, John 14 and verse 26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” And then turn to John chapter 16 and verse 12: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” That is, “You don’t, you don’t have what it takes to understand them.” But now, notice this in verse 13: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself (that means he’s not going to be the origin of his own ideas), but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” So he’s going not only to represent Jesus and reproduce Jesus, but He’s coming to reveal Jesus. He’s just coming to reveal Jesus. The only way that you can really know the things of Jesus is for the Holy Spirit to teach you. I’ve told you many times that I can preach truth, but He alone can impart truth. I am the preacher; He is the teacher. And so, the Holy Spirit of God is just going to take the things of Jesus and show them unto you. You know, I, I love what he says. He, he says, “I will, he will take the things of mine and show them unto you.” One of the Bible types of the Lord Jesus is Isaac. Isaac needed a bride. So Abraham, who represents God the Father, sent Eleazar, who represents the Holy Spirit, the name Eleazar, who was Abraham’s servant, sent Eleazar. And the name Eleazar literally means “the helper of God.” Eleazar means “God’s helper.” And that’s what he is. He is the helper of God. And so, Abraham sent Eleazar to seek a bride for Isaac. Well, Eleazar went down there and he found Rebekah. And he’s bringing Rebekah back to marry Isaac. Now you talk about a great salesman. Eleazar had to be a great salesman because he convinced a girl he had never known to go with him to marry a man she’d never met. Pretty good salesmanship, ladies, isn’t that right? But he did that. And that represents the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, because the Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus, “...whom having not seen, we love.” You see, that’s what the Holy Spirit has done. We’ve not seen Him. But the Holy Spirit of God, who is our convincer, has convinced us that we

are to love the Lord Jesus Christ. And I do love Him. I haven't seen Him. The marriage feast has not been yet. But I love Him. I believe right now, friend, He's standing at the edge of that field waiting to receive His bride. But all along the way Eleazar had the treasures that belonged to Isaac. Now he had loaded down his camels with all kinds of treasures. And so, they're going back to meet Isaac. And Eleazar, who represents the Holy Spirit, is setting, sitting next to Rebekah, who represents the church. She's going to meet Isaac. She loves him just because of what Eleazar has said, but she's never seen him. She's just going now for that wedding. But he looks over at her. Eleazar is a wise man. He looks over at Rebekah. Sometimes he sees a chin as it begins to quiver just a little bit. Sometimes he sees that glistening in the corner of her eye. Sometimes he sees her just kind of fumbling with her handkerchief. He knows she's nervous. He knows that she's wondering, *Is, is this the truth. Has this man really represented Isaac? Is Isaac really as strong, as handsome, as rich, as kind as he says that he is? Is there really a father Abraham who's received promises from God? Is all of this really true?* She gets to wondering about that. And the Bible says that Eleazar had a little box of jewels. He'd just open the box of jewels. He'd put a necklace around her neck. He'd say, "This is from Isaac. He wanted you to have it. He's so wonderful. He really is a wonderful man." And all along the way he was just giving little gifts to her and talking to her about Isaac. You know, that's a perfect illustration of what the Holy Spirit does. Jesus said, "He'll not speak of Himself. He'll take the things of mine and He'll show them unto you," see. That's what He's there for, just to, just to teach us, just to teach us about the Lord Jesus, whom having not seen, we love.

IV. God Sent the Holy Spirit to Release Jesus Through Us

Now how can you do greater works? Well, dear friend, I'll tell you how. He sends the Holy Spirit to reproduce Christ in us, to represent Christ to us, to reveal Christ to us. And then one last thing, dear friend. He has come, He has come to release Jesus through us. Look, if you will again, in John chapter 16 and verse 14: "He shall glorify me. He shall glorify me..." You see, Rick and Bernie, do you know what the world needs? It needs to see Jesus. And how is the world going to see Jesus when Jesus is glorified? Now today, we hear a lot about the charismatic movement. We hear many people talking much about the Holy Spirit. But you don't hear the Holy Spirit talking about the Holy Spirit. You hear the Holy Spirit talking about Jesus. Now, certainly, we must study doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. And, certainly, we must honor the Holy Spirit. And I would not do Him disservice at all. But I'm going to tell you something I've learned a long time ago. You beware of any movement that has the Holy Spirit for a figurehead, whatever it is. That it's not that the Holy Spirit is less than God. He is God of very God. But if you see a movement that tries to make the Holy Spirit a figurehead,

you'll know there's something wrong, because in Bible theology you do not see the Holy Spirit leading the parade. You see Christ leading the parade and the Holy Spirit standing on the sidelines pointing Him out. "He shall take the things of mine and He will show them unto you." And the mark that a man is filled with the Holy Spirit is not that the man is talking always about the Holy Spirit. The mark that a man is Spirit-filled is that he's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. "He will glorify me..." Now I want to tell you men this: That if you are a believer, not only are you to equal the works of Jesus; you are to exceed the works of Jesus, as we all are.

Conclusion

And the only way that is possible is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who is here to reproduce Jesus in you, to represent Jesus to you, reveal Jesus through you. And may you let Him do that all of your lives. Father God, ah, seal the message I pray to our hearts in Your name, amen.

A Spirit-Filled Church

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 16, 2005

Main Scripture Text: John 14:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Bellevue's Exciting Program
- II. Bellevue's Explicit Promise
- III. Bellevue's Expected Practice
- IV. Bellevue's Exceeding Power

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding John chapter 14 and verse 12. We have been in a series of studies together talking about the kind of a church that we want to be, the new horizons, what God has for us, and what I've tried to teach you to do and be for over 30 years. And we've talked about being a unified church. That was Sunday before last. And then, last Sunday, we talked to you about being a steadfast church. And now, today, I want to talk to you about being a Spirit-filled church.

I heard about a man who was working in his woodworking shop. He was a retiree. He nicked his finger. His wife said, "Well, you'd better go down to the minor medical place and have them take a look at that. So he drove down there and he saw it. It said, front door. He went in the front door and not a soul was in that room. And he saw two other doors: one said "Male," the other said "Female." He said, "Well, I'm a male." He went in that door. Then he saw two more doors: one said, "Over 60," and the other said, "Under 60." He said, "Well, I'm over 60," so he went in that door. Then he saw two more doors: "Minor" or "Major." He said, "Well, that's minor, and he went in that door. And then two more doors: "Above the waist" or "Below the waist." He said, "Well, I think that's above the waist if I hold it up this way," and he went through that door, and he was back out in the alley. He came home. His wife said, "Did they help you?" He said, "No, but they sure were organized?"

You know, I believe people come to church that way. And we process them. We grade them. We put them here and here and here and here. And they come in one door, they go out the other door, but there is no radical, dramatic change. Now, friend, when you worship God, you ought to be changed, amen?

Well, Jesus said that we're to be in a wonderful business. Look in verse 12: "Verily, verily..."—now, when Jesus says verily, verily, that means pay attention, pay attention—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also—now, listen—and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father." Wow!—"He that believes on me."

Now, there are only two classes of people in this building this morning: believers and unbelievers. How many believers? Let me see your hand. All right. You're a believer. I'm a believer. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do, and greater works than these shall he do."

Now, how many of you who say that you believe are doing the works of Jesus—and greater works? Well, you say, "I'm a believer, but I'm not doing this." Well, something's wrong, and it's not the Scripture.

I heard about a battle where the flag-bearer got out in front of the regiment in enemy territory. And someone said to the captain, "Shall we bring the flag back to the regiment?" The captain said, "No, bring the regiment up to the flag." Now, when we read a scripture like this, we're tempted to bring the flag back to where we are, amen? We're tempted to dumb it down so it fits our experience. But Jesus said, "If we are a believer, if we believe in Him, the works that He does, we will do, and greater works than these shall we do."

Four things I want to lay on your heart this morning as we're talking about a Spirit-filled church.

I. Bellevue's Exciting Program

First of all, Bellevue's exciting program. What is Bellevue's exciting program? Very clearly, very plainly, it's not an activities program. It's not a music program. It's not an educational program. It's not a benevolent program. Bellevue's exciting program is to do the works of Jesus and to exceed the works of Jesus. You say, "Well, wait a minute, Pastor, how could we do them, much less exceed them? Jesus walked on water! Jesus raised the dead! What can we do that is greater than what Jesus did?" Well, friend, I want to tell you that what our Lord is talking about is not raising the dead. As a matter of fact, when I die, I don't want you to try to raise me. Let me alone! Now, just make sure I'm dead. But don't try to raise me up.

Our Lord here, when He's talking about greater works, He is not talking about quality; He's talking about quantity of doing more than the Lord Jesus did. Now, He's talking about leading people to Himself. He's talking about evangelism. He's talking about soul winning. He's talking about multiplication. He is talking about bringing people to Jesus Christ. Church, you listen to me. Bringing a soul to Jesus Christ is greater than

raising a man from the dead. Now, I know you may not believe that, but I'm telling you, as surely as I stand here, it is absolute rock-ribbed truth! To bring a soul to Jesus Christ is greater than raising someone from the dead.

Now, just turn backward to John chapter 5 and look in verses 20 through 24. Jesus is speaking. He says, "For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and will show him—now, notice this—greater works than these." Again now, we're talking about greater works.

I'm going to skip on down to verse 24 now: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Even the people that Jesus raised, they died again. But when we believe on Him, when we trust Him, we have everlasting life.

You want to see a miracle? Look up here, right here. You're looking at a man who cannot die. And Jesus said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Now, what is the greater miracle? What is the greater work: to raise a man from the dead or to help a man to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him so that they can never die? These greater works refer to the salvation ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him that sent me." What did God send Jesus to do? To heal the sick? No. To feed the hungry? No. He did these things, but Luke 19:10 says what He came to do is this: "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Jesus came not as the great healer, not as the great teacher. He is that, but He came as a Savior. And Jesus said, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do"—John chapter 17 and verse 4. So, what did God the Father give Jesus to do? Well, listen. Let me just go back and read John 17:1 through 4: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son—now, listen—that thy Son also may glorify thee—just underscore that, "that thy Son also may glorify thee"—as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give—now, watch this—eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." Do you get it? Do you see it? Jesus said, "Father, I have given them eternal life. That's what You sent me to do. And, Lord, that is the way that I glorify You." The work of God is to bring souls to Jesus Christ, and that glorifies God. Say amen. Now, don't miss this—don't miss this.

Well, why does He say, "greater works than these that I do shall ye do"? He's not talking about greater in quality, but in quantity. We, as a church, are going to do far more than Jesus did when He was here on this earth walking in the flesh.

Friend, on the Day of Pentecost, more souls were saved in one day than came to Jesus in His entire ministry. Now, what our Lord wants is souls, multiplied souls, coming to Jesus. And, church, God wants you to be a part of it. God wants Bellevue to be a Spirit-filled church, doing the works of Jesus; that is, giving eternal life, and greater, more multitudinous, than Jesus ever did.

I heard about a man in Washington who passed a government building. And up there on the façade it said, “The past is prologue.” He said, “What does that mean?” The taxi driver said, “It means, ‘You ain’t seen nothing yet.’” Now, that’s the way it is with the church.

When we saw what Jesus did, that is miniscule to what needs to be done, what ought to be done. Our Lord is saying, “Bellevue, Bellevue, listen. Greater works than these that I do will you do. if you believe on me.” Do you believe on Jesus? Do you believe on Jesus? All right now, listen. This is Bellevue’s exciting program. The choir is wonderful. The orchestra is fine. The preaching, mediocre. The educational program, fine. All of these are fine, but they all are only a part of a great program, and that is doing the works of Jesus. And what is the work of Jesus? He said, “I’ve finished the work thou gavest me, sent me to do. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” Never, never, never, never minimize bringing souls to Jesus Christ. There is no substitute. And if this church moves away from evangelism, it signs its death warrant. A church exists by evangelism like a fire exists by burning. Now, that’s Bellevue’s exciting program.

II. Bellevue’s Explicit Promise

Let’s shift gears, and I want you to remember and see Bellevue’s explicit promise. Now, in verse 12 He speaks of these greater works. And notice that verse 12 and verse 13 are conjoined. And He says, “And”—that is, it’s part of the same thing—“greater works than these that I do shall ye do. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

Now, how do we do these greater works? We do these greater works by believing prayer. Now, I mentioned a while back about 3,000 saved in one day on the Day of Pentecost. Well, they prayed for 10 days, preached for 15 minutes, and 3,000 got saved. We pray for 10 minutes, and preach for 10 days, and have a handful saved. You see, this program, this exciting program, is based upon a promise. And that promise is God will answer our prayer.

Now, prayer is not a substitute for our work. Prayer is not preliminary to our work. In many senses, it is our work—in many senses. Do you believe that God will do greater

things through your prayer? Now, don't answer out loud, because the next question will be embarrassing. How much do you pray? Jesus said, "Greater works than these that I do you'll do, because I go to my Father. And if you ask anything in my name, I will do it." Now, you can go a lot without prayer. The pyramids were built without prayer to our true God. They may have prayed to their pagan gods. But this church, in order to do the greater works that Jesus commands us to do, we must do it by prayer. And notice what kind of prayer it is.

Number one: You've got to have the right people. Verse 12 tells us that we must believe. Now, if you're not a believer, your prayer doesn't get any higher than the light bulbs. But if you believe, if you're the right person, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ—and, by the way, if you don't find in your heart an earnest desire to pray, I wonder if you're saved, because God sends forth His Spirit into our hearts, crying, "Abba Father, Abba Father." There must be the right person—verse 12.

There must be the right power. "And if you ask anything in my name, I will do it." Now, you can't just forge His name to a prayer and say, "This is in the name of Jesus: I want a swimming pool." No. What does it mean to ask in His name? The name stands for authority. You put your name on a check. That gives the cashier the authority to take some money out of the bank and hand it to you because you have some in your account, I hope. Now, if you don't have anything in your account, and you put your name on that check, they don't put the check in jail; they put you in jail, because, you see, your name stands for you. Jesus said, "If you ask anything in my name; that is, with my authority, my approval, then I'll do it—then I'll do it." Very much like a policeman.

Maybe there's a wild party, and he goes and knocks on the door. And they come, and he says, "Open up in the name of the law." Now, he might be 150 pounds, full of bananas, and soaking wet, but he says, "Open in the name of the law." He has a badge on. He has authority. We, as believers, have authority. We don't have to have physical strength, monetary strength, intellectual superiority. We have the authority of Jesus Christ. Do you believe that? I hope you do. Now, the right person—he that believes. "And if you ask anything in my name"—the right power.

Now, let's suppose that policeman goes home, and he goes to his neighbor and says, "May I borrow your lawnmower, in the name of the law." It doesn't fit, does it? It just doesn't fit, because, you see, he cannot take that authority and apply it to something there where it does not belong. And don't you think you can just tack "In the name of Jesus" on a prayer and get your prayer answered. In the name of Jesus—it means for the right purpose. Now, what is the right purpose? Well, just continue to read here in this scripture, verse 13: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do—now, watch this—that the Father may be glorified in the Son." What is the purpose

of prayer? It's to glorify God, not to have our little selfish desires met.

When you get the right person praying with the right power for the right purpose, let me tell you how to get your prayers answered. Let your purpose and God's purpose come together, that you want God glorified.

Bellevue, listen to me. We are to do greater works than the Lord Jesus Christ. And the way we do that is through, first of all, believing prayer. And God has given us an explicit promise. Don't take from it. Don't add to it. Believe it and practice it.

III. Bellevue's Expected Practice

Number three: there's Bellevue's expected practice. All of these things are conjoined: the greater works, the prayer—and now notice verse 15: “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Now, if you say you love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you're not keeping His commandments, you are a liar! Do you keep His commandments? Now, if you don't keep His commandments, it's no wonder that you're not doing greater works. And what is His commandment? It's the Great Commission. “Go, and make disciples.” What are the greater works? Bringing people to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “You'll receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me.” He didn't say you're to go out and argue. You say, “Pastor, I'm not educated. I don't know a lot of theology. I can't witness.” Oh, yes, you can! If you're saved, if you believe on Jesus, you can witness. If you're saved, you know how you got saved, don't you? Say huh-huh. Well, if you know how you got saved, can't you tell somebody else how you got saved? You see, our Lord has not called you to be a lawyer, but to be a witness. A lawyer argues a case; a witness tells what he's seen and heard. And the only reason some people don't witness is they haven't seen or heard anything. I mean, if Jesus Christ has saved you, can't you tell somebody else? The first soul I ever led to Christ, all I did was tell him how I got saved, and he got saved. It was very simple, very glorious, very wonderful. Now, there's no cheap, easy way to do it.

The word witness and the word martyr are the same word in the Greek language. You see, a bullet doesn't make a martyr; it just reveals one. Now, you say, “Oh, I'd die for Jesus.” Put that on the shelf. Will you live for Jesus? Will you? I'm telling you that the word martyr and the word witness are the same word.

Now, He says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” That is Bellevue's expected practice. Over and over and over again, He tells us in the Bible that we're to share the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at this church. Look at the manpower. Look at the ability. When I look back upon the ministry that God has given me, there's a great sense of failure. Do you know what it is? Somehow I have not engendered a soul-winning heart in the life of our

people. Oh, we have soul winners, but there are a lot of people who think they've done God a wild favor when they get here on Sunday morning. You ask them, "Do you serve Jesus?" They say, "I go to church." Friend, you're to do the works of Jesus, and greater works shall you do." And you are expected to obey the Lord, if you love the Lord.

IV. Bellevue's Exceeding Power

Now, next, I want you to notice Bellevue's exceeding power. For an excelling purpose and an exciting purpose and an expanded purpose, you're going to need exceeding power. Now, we continue to read here. We're still in John 14. Now, let's start with verse 16: "And I will pray the Father—now, He says you pray, and now, what He says—and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Who was dwelling with them? Jesus. Who would be in them? Jesus. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian.

Now, our Lord says, "Look, you have a mission impossible. You're to do the works that I do, and greater works than these." "Pray, obey, and I'm going to send you the Comforter, another Comforter." The word Comforter is the word *paraclete*, *parakletos*, and the word means somebody who will come alongside of you, someone who will get into yoke with you to empower you and to strengthen you. You'll never be alone. "Another Comforter." And He uses the word another. There are two Greek words for another. One means another of a different kind. For example, you say, "I've got a horse, but I need another horse." But then there's the word another in the Bible; it means another of a different kind. "I've got a horse, but I'm going to get an automobile." There's a different word for another there.

Now, the word that Jesus uses is not the word another for a different kind, but another of the same kind. "I will send you another Comforter. I'm right here with you, but I'm going to send the Holy Spirit." And then He says, "I'll be with you." Do you get it, church? Do you understand it? Listen. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you!" In a Christian, Jesus lives again. That's the way we can do the works that Jesus did and the greater works. You know what He said there in verse 13, "If you ask anything in my name—what?—I'll do it—I'll do it." He didn't say, I'll help you to do it. "I'll do it." "I'm crucified with Christ," Paul said, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

You see, listen. God moves in and God begins to work in you, through you, when you believe Him for greater works than raising the dead, when you pray believing prayer

in the name of Jesus with His authority for the glory of God, when you obey Him when He says, “ye shall be witnesses unto me,” then God will empower you. God sends the Holy Spirit. God sends another Comforter, who is Jesus Christ in you.

Stuart Briscoe, a preacher friend of mine, said that, “When I first got saved, I was so full of joy. I walked out and I said, ‘Man, this is easy. This is wonderful.’” Then after he lived a while and got his nose bumped a few times, he said, “This is difficult.” And then, as he repented and tried to get better and stronger and made more resolutions and resolves and failed more, he said, “Aw, this is impossible.” But then he learned the secret of Christ in him, and he said, “This is wonderful. This is wonderful.”

I’ve told you, church—listen to me—there’s only one who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus. And if the Christian life is lived in your house, in your club, on your team, in your choir, there’s only one person who’ll be doing it: it’s Jesus! We’re not to be a little tin imitation of Jesus. It is Christ in us. Oh, God, help us to understand this. Help me, Lord, to understand it, that Jesus Christ is alive in me, and He said, “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.” He is the one who steps in. This is the exceeding power that we have to do these greater works than the Lord Jesus Christ. And He says, “I’m going to come, the Comforter will abide.” That means to dwell forever. The late, great Ron Dunn said, “Your heart is not a hotel with check-out time 12:00 noon on Sunday.” He lives with us and is with us. Now, you think about it.

Do you remember what Jesus said in John chapter 16, verse 7? He said, “Nevertheless I tell you, it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I don’t go away, the Comforter will not come.” Now, how many of us would say, “You know, boy, I just wish I could have been here when Jesus was on earth. Man, I just wish I could have walked with Jesus, breathed that air, been there in the miracle times when Jesus was here. Wouldn’t that be better?” “No,” Jesus said, “it wouldn’t be better. It is better for you; it is expedient for you that I go away.” When Jesus left this earth and went back to heaven, that was glorious, because when He went away, He then sent the Spirit to take His place. Now, what’s the difference? Well, when Jesus was here on earth, He was limited by time and space. Mary and Martha said to Jesus, “Master, if you had been here, Lazarus wouldn’t have died.” But when Jesus was here on earth, if He was there, He couldn’t be there. But, friend, when He comes into you with the Holy Spirit—are you listening?—Jesus is with me, He’s with him, He’s with you—He’s with you—and He’s not limited by space. He’s not limited by time. He lives and dwells in all of us through the Holy Spirit of God and, therefore, the church is the body of Jesus on this earth. The church is the visible body of the invisible Christ, and Christ is the invisible person of the visible church. “If you ask anything in my name, I’ll do it.”

Conclusion

You say, “How can I do the works of Jesus, and greater works?” Because He’ll still be doing it, but He will now do them in you and you and you and you, and me and me and me. And don’t you cop out. This is the work of the whole church for the whole age.

You know what I want for Bellevue? I want Bellevue to bring not thousands, but millions of souls to Jesus Christ. Millions! Millions! Why not? Jesus lives in me. Jesus lives in you. And He says, “If we will believe, greater works than these that I do will ye do because you believe in me.”

Now, there are three miracles that deal with your life. One is the first miracle when you got saved. That new birth is a miracle. The second miracle is when you’re glorified at the Rapture, the resurrection, when you’re made like the Lord Jesus. But there’s a middle miracle, and that’s when you and I live day by day empowered by the Holy Spirit, and say with the Apostle Paul, “nevertheless I live; not I, but Christ who lives in me.”

My heartbeat, my prayer, for this dear church is that we will be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ and God will look down from heaven with a smile and say, “Look at that. They’re doing more than My Son did. Greater works than He did, because they believe in me, because they pray and obey, and because I dwell in them.”

Do you think you understand this? I can’t tell. Do you think you understand it? Now, let me tell you something. That’s good. But it’d be far better for you not to understand it than to understand it and not obey it.

I want you to present yourself to the Lord right now, and say, “Lord God, here I am. I am available. I know that You want to do greater works than Jesus did because I believe in You, and I will pray in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God, and I will obey. Oh, Lord, help me, because I’m so weak, but I will. And, Lord, You will empower me with Your blessed, precious Holy Spirit to do the job.” Now, we can’t all do it the same way. We can’t all be preachers, but we can all be reachers, amen? If you can’t win an adult, win a child. If you can’t win somebody in your family, bring somebody else. If you can’t do it, at least try. Bring souls to Jesus Christ.

Now, if you’re not a Christian, if you’re not saved, you can’t be a part of this program until you give your heart to Jesus. “He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do, and greater works than these.”

Would you bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, if you’d like to be saved, and have your sin forgiven, and know that you’re going to heaven, and know that you have a purpose here beyond drawing your breathe and drawing your salary, you want to be a part of something great, the program of God, greater works than Jesus, then you need Jesus in your heart. Now, let me tell you some facts while heads are bowed, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will let these facts sink into

your head.

First of all, we are sinners: sinners by birth, by nature, by practice, and sinners under condemnation. God will never, ever, ever, ever overlook anybody's sins. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. And, friend, I can tell you there's not anyone in this building today who has not sinned.

Second thing I want to tell you is this: that Jesus Christ took the penalty that our sins deserved and He carried them to the cross. He was our substitute. He took your sin and mine; suffered, bled, and died alone on the cross, as we sang this morning, and with His blood He paid the sin debt.

And the third thing I want you to know is that you must receive that. If you don't receive it, it does you no good. It only increases your judgment.

The fourth thing I want you to know is that you receive it by faith. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved." He doesn't say, feel a certain way. As far as I can find, the word feeling is only used twice in the New Testament. The emphasis is on faith, trusting Jesus. It's not an emotional thing. It may show in your emotions, and if you really mean it, it probably will, but the emotions are secondary. Put your faith where God has put your sins: on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe and you'll be saved.

I invite you to pray a prayer like this: Dear God, I need You. I want You. Help me to trust Jesus, and to make it public, and to make it real today. In Your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you're willing to trust Christ, I'm going to ask you to do something wonderful. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all across the front of this church to welcome you will be a minister of our church. If you're in the balcony, standing under that banner there that says Redeemer, or this one over here in the corner that says Messiah, will be somebody to welcome you as you come. And if, today, once and for all, now and forever, you're saying, "I'm coming to the Lord's side, I'm receiving Christ as my personal Savior, and I don't care who knows it; why, I wish the whole world knew it; openly, publicly, gladly, I'm coming to stand for the One who died for me and let it be known that I'm trusting Him," your coming forward will be your way of saying that.

"Well, Pastor Rogers, when I get down there to the minister, what should I say to him?" Just say, "I want to be saved," or, "I'm trusting Christ," and we'll take an open Bible and guide you in this decision, and seal it in prayer, and you can go home today a child of God.

Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. We're going to sing, "Lord, I receive; Lord, I believe; Lord, I confess You now." And you step out and come. We'll treat you kindly, courteously. We'll share Jesus with you. Wouldn't it be wonderful to go

home with Christ in your heart, ready to do the works of Jesus, and greater works even?

Others of you need a church home. Bellevue is a wonderful church. I invite you to come down one of these aisles and say, "I want to place my membership here." Now, I'm talking to those of you who are already saved.

Now, if you haven't had believer's baptism, when you come, we'll make an appointment for your baptism, if you're saved and want to become a member of this church.

Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave. We'll all be in a spirit of prayer. Let's stand with our heads bowed. Now, Father, I pray in the name of Jesus, Lord, that You will open hearts and bring souls to Him. Oh, Jesus, give people courage and help them to obey. In Your holy name. Amen.

You step out as we begin to sing. You come now.

A Spirit-filled Church

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 16, 2005

Main Scripture Text: John 14:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Bellevue's Exciting Program
- II. Bellevue's Explicit Promise
- III. Bellevue's Expected Practice
- IV. Bellevue's Exceeding Power

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, let's take God's Word and study it together. Would you open, please, to John chapter 14, and in just a moment we're going to turn our attention to verse 12. We've been talking about Milestones and New Horizons, and I've been talking to you about the kind of a church I tried to endeavor to teach you to be these more than 30 years we've been together and what I want us to be in the future. And I talked to you, first of all, about a unified church. And then I talked to you about a steadfast church, the way the devil's going to try to attack Bellevue Baptist Church. Today, I want to talk to you about a Spirit-filled church, okay?

I heard a story of a man who was working in his woodshop. He was a retiree. And he nicked his finger on a saw. So his wife said, "You'd better go down there to minor medical and see what they can do for you." So he went down there to this place, the minor medical center, and he saw the door, and he walked in. There was not a person in the waiting room, nobody to receive him, no receptionist. But he saw two other doors. One said "Male," the other said "Female." Well, he said, "I'm a male." He went through that door and he saw two other doors: "Above 60 years," "Under 60 years." He said, "Well, I'm over 60," so he went in that door. He saw two more doors. It said, "Above the waist," or "Below the waist." He said, "Well, let me see. I guess it's above the waist if I hold it this way." So he went through that door, and it said "Major" or "Minor." He said, "Well, I guess that's minor," and he went through that door and he was out in the alley. He came home. His wife said, "Did they help you?" He said, "No, but they were really organized."

Now, you know, that's humorous, but I think a lot of churches are that way. We know how to sort and manipulate and guide people through the labyrinth of our programs, but

they come in one door and they go out the other, and they're not really changed. A church is to be God's change agent.

Now, I want to read to you one of the most remarkable statements in the entire Word of God. John chapter 14, verse 12—listen to it. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you...”—now, whenever you see verily, verily, that means truly, truly; pay attention, pay attention; amen, amen; listen—“Verily, verily, I say unto you—now, this is not Adrian; this is Jesus speaking right now. Jesus says—I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father.” Did you hear that? “The works that I do, you'll do, and greater works than these will you do; because I go to my Father.” Now, folks, there is a spiritual feast here, and I hope that you don't miss it.

Now, let me ask you this question: How many of you believe on Jesus? Let me see your hand. I'll lift mine. All right now, how many of you—don't lift your hand this time—but how many of you are doing the works of Jesus, and greater works than Jesus? Now, the Bible says, if you believe, you will. Now, I think we've got a lot of unbelieving believers.

I heard about a battle where the flag got out beyond the regiment, and they said to the captain, “Shall we bring the flag back to the regiment?” He said, “No, let's bring the regiment up to the flag.”

Now, so many times when we see a promise like this in the Word of God, we try to dumb it down. We try to explain it away so we don't have to be faced with the fact that Jesus said, if we believe on Him, we're going to do the works that He did, and greater works than these.

Now, there are four thoughts I want to lay on your heart this morning as we talk about a Spirit-filled church, and as my heart pounds within me this morning, saying, “Oh, God, help me to explain this to Your children, to your believers.”

I. Bellevue's Exciting Program

First of all, I want you to see God's exciting program. What is God's exciting program? That we as a church are to do the works of Jesus. And not only duplicate them, but exceed them. Greater works. Well, He doesn't say greater miracles; He says greater works. He doesn't say here that Jesus walked on water, so we'll fly through the air; or Jesus fed 5,000, so we'll feed 10,000; or Jesus raised some dead, so we'll raise a lot more dead. No, that's not what He's saying. He's not talking about greater miracles. He's talking about greater works. And He's not talking about quality; He's talking about quantity. We're going to do greater—more in number—than the Lord Jesus Christ did.

Well, what was the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? When He said, “I must work the

works of him that sent me while it is day, for night comes when no man can work,” why did Jesus come? He didn’t come as a teacher. He didn’t come as a healer. He didn’t come as a lawyer. He didn’t come as a philosopher. He came as a Savior. Do you believe that? “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” Luke 19:10 says—a great verse, “The Son of man—that’s Jesus—is come to seek and to save that which is lost. And Jesus said to the Father, “Father, I have finished the work that you gave me to do.” And then He says to the Church, “The works that I do shall you do, and greater works than these shall you do; because I go to my Father.” Now, the thing that we are to do, therefore, in the name of Jesus, the greater ministry, is to bring men, women, boys and girls to Jesus Christ.

Now, you may not believe it, but soul winning is a greater work than raising the dead. I mean, if you raise a dead man, and he lives a few more years, and then dies and goes to hell, what is that? What good is that? I’d rather have the ability to bring people to Jesus Christ than to raise the dead. You say, “You’re lying.” No, I’m not lying. The Bible says of John the Baptist—and, by the way, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb—the Bible says of John the Baptist, “John did no miracle, but many believed on Jesus because of his word.” That’s what I want said about my life: not that I was a miracle worker, but that I did the work of Jesus, which is bringing souls to Jesus Christ, that they might have the eternal life that He spoke of.

John chapter 17—look, if you will, in verses 1 through 4: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh—now, listen to this—that he should give—underscore this—eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.”

What was the work? It was to help people to have eternal life, everlasting life. Jesus fed the multitude and they got hungry again. Jesus healed the sick; they got sick again. Jesus raised the dead; they died again. But, friend, when you have eternal life, you’ve got something. Say amen. Now, this is true. The work of Jesus was to bring eternal life to poor lost souls and therefore glorify God. And so, that’s the greater miracle and the greater ministry than walking on water. “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do that believe on me.”

Now, Jesus in His ministry led some people to Christ. Some got saved. Zacchaeus got saved. Nicodemus got saved. The woman at the well got saved. And I thank God for that handful of people who got saved under the ministry of Jesus Christ. But on the Day of Pentecost, in one day, 3,000 got saved. That’s more than got saved, in one day, than

with Jesus in 3 ½ years of public ministry. “Greater works than these that I do shall you do that believe on me; because I go to my Father.”

Friend, what we’re talking about now is not greater in quality. You’ll never do anything greater in quality than Jesus did, but we can do things greater in quantity, and He tells us why: because He goes to the Father. Now, that’s Bellevue’s exciting program.

Church, listen to me. Our program is to bring people to Jesus Christ. That’s what we’re all about. That’s why we exist. Our program is not a preaching program, not a music program, not an activities program. Our program is to bring souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel, and lay them at Jesus’ feet. And a church that’s not a soul-winning missionary church is not worthy of the ground upon which its building stands. And a person who doesn’t have a compassion, a heartbeat for souls, I want to tell you, is not right with God. I don’t care how much you give. I care not how eloquently you may speak. I don’t care how beautifully you may sing. I don’t care how circumspectly you may walk, and how faithful you attend. If you’re not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you’re not right with God. That was a good place for an amen. You’re not right with God if you don’t endeavor to bring souls to Jesus Christ. This is God’s exciting program.

II. Bellevue’s Explicit Promise

Now, let’s just shift gears and think about how this is going to be done. And I want you to see what I’m going to call Bellevue’s explicit promise. God gave this church an explicit promise. We continue to read. We’re in verse 12, and then we go to verse 13: “And—just underscore the word *and*—whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

What is the explicit promise? That if we ask in the name of Jesus, He will do it. Now, the greater works that we talked about in verse 12, we tell how these are going to be done in verse 13. It is by believing prayer.

I mentioned that 3,000 were saved on one day, the Day of Pentecost. They prayed for 10 days, and 3,000 were saved. We pray for 10 minutes, and preach for 10 days, and few get saved, because we have not taken God at His word. Leonard Ravenhill said, “One of these days, somebody’s going to pick up this Bible, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves.”

Now, folks, we don’t need to explain this away. This is what Jesus said. We are to pray. Now, we want to do everything but pray. It may be easier to give than it is to pray. It may be easier to attend than it is to pray. It may be easier to teach than it is to pray. It

may be easier to attend a prayer meeting than it is to pray. Now, there are some qualifications for this prayer.

First of all, He says, “He that believes on me will do these greater works.” So you have to have the right person. The person is a believer. This promise is not given to an unsaved person. It is given to a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we believe on Him.

But not only do we have the right person doing the praying; we have the right power. Jesus said here in verse 13: “If you ask anything—what?—in my name.” Now, name stands for authority. Jesus said, “If you pray with my authority.”

When a policeman goes to an apartment, he thinks something is going on wrong in that apartment, he may knock on the door. He may not have enormous muscles. He may not have a machine gun in his hand. But he says, “Open in the name of the law.” And he’s wearing a badge. And behind that badge is the authority of the law, the entire police force, and the state militia, if necessary; and, if necessary, the armies of the United States of America were all right behind that badge, and he says, “Open in the name of the law,” with the authority of the law. Now, that’s the authority that you have when you pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Name stands for authority.

When you put your name on a check, that gives the bank the authority to take money out of your account and hand it over to yourself, or to someone else. Now, if you don’t have money in the bank and you write the check, they don’t put the check in jail; they put you in jail. You see, the name stands for you. It stands for your authority, your will. You see, we’re to pray for what Jesus commands us to pray, what Jesus authorizes, not just what we think up. “Oh, I want a pink Cadillac and a swimming pool.” No! Listen. You ask in His name. Can He sign His name to it? You have to have the right person, a believer. You have the right power, His authority.

And then, you have to have the right purpose. Now, listen. “That the Father may be glorified in the Son”—that’s the purpose of prayer, and that’s the purpose of the name.

Suppose that same policeman comes home and he goes to his next door neighbor and says, “May I borrow your lawnmower, in the name of the law.” It doesn’t fit, does it? He didn’t get that badge to borrow lawnmowers with. God does not give you the authority of Jesus Christ for something like that. When your motive for asking is the same as God’s for giving, then your prayer is going to be answered. Now, this is a promise. And I pray that this church, dear Bellevue Baptist Church, will continue over and over and over, and that you, personally, will learn how to pray in the name of Jesus.

III. Bellevue’s Expected Practice

Let’s shift gears again. We’ve talked about our exciting program. We’ve talked about

our exact promise. Let's talk a little bit about our expected practice.

What comes out of this program—this greater works that He tells us to do, and this praying in the name of Jesus? May I tell you what comes out of it: obedience! What is the expected practice? It is obedience. Now, let's just go right on to verse 15. He says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Don't you sing, "Oh, how I love Jesus," if you're not obeying the commandments. Don't you prate about your love for Jesus, if you're not obeying Him. There are a number of people in this world. If you were to ask them, "Do you love Jesus," they'd say, "Yes, I love Jesus," but they're lying, because they are not obeying Him. He has commanded us to share the gospel to do these greater works. Acts chapter 1, verse 8, He said, "Greater works than these that I do shall you do." And then, He says in Acts 1:8: "And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." Not you ought to be; you shall be. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit of God, you can't help but witness. If you don't have a desire to bring souls to Christ, you may not even be saved. But if you are saved and don't have that desire, I can promise you, you are not Spirit-filled. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." A Christian who is not a witness is a contradiction in terms. Now, you say, "Well, Pastor, I don't have a seminary education." No, look. We can't all be preachers, but we can all be reachers. There's somebody that you're to bring to Jesus Christ, somebody that you need to influence toward Christ. You need to be a part of a team bringing people to greet Jesus Christ. If you can't win an adult, win a child. If you can't win your own child, win somebody else's child. If you can't win your next door neighbor, bring somebody on the job. But day after day after day, we're to be continually doing what He has commanded us to do, and that's to go into all the world and make disciples. Now, listen. You don't have to be trained to do this. I hope you'll get into E. E. and get trained because it'll make you more effective. But you don't have to go to school to be a witness.

Suppose you see a crime, and they bring you into the courtroom, and they say, "We want you for a witness." You'd say, "No, no, I'm not skilled. I'm not trained. I'm not qualified." They say, "No, that doesn't make any difference. All we want you to do is to tell what you've seen and heard." That's what a witness is. Do you know why some people are not witnesses? They haven't seen anything or heard anything.

I remember the first soul I ever led to the Lord Jesus Christ. I didn't use the Roman road. I didn't use the E. E. procedure. All I did was just tell what happened to me, and that man got saved. I was just a kid, but that man got saved because I shared what happened to me. Friend, a Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments. Jesus didn't say, you'll be my lawyers. He said, "You'll be my witnesses." So

a lawyer is somebody who argues a case; a witness is somebody who tells what he's seen and heard. And, listen. It costs to witness—time, energy, sometimes shame and abuse.

Did you know that the word witness and the word martyr is the same word in the Bible? The same word! You see, a bullet does not make a martyr; it just reveals a martyr. Now, do away with all this stuff about your being willing to die for Jesus if you won't live for Him. And if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus, you're not living for Him. Jesus said, if you believe in Him, the works that He does, you'll do, and greater works than these will you do, because He goes to the Father.

Now, He says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." That is the program that He has for all of us. And that is the practice that He wants us to practice.

Now, let's come to the final thing. We've talked about an exciting program. We have talked about a precise prayer, and an expected practice, that we're going to be obeying Him. God expects us to obey. If we love Him, we will obey Him.

IV. Bellevue's Exceeding Power

Now, finally, let's think about Bellevue's exceeding power. If God gives us an excelling purpose to do greater works than Jesus, then He has to give us exceeding power. Now, go back again and look at verse 12. He says here, "the works that I do shall ye do and greater works than these—now, listen—because I go to my Father." Doing greater works than Jesus is tied up in the fact that Jesus has gone to the Father. Now, what does that mean? Well, let's go on down to verse 16. Jesus says now, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him—now, listen to this—for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Sounds like double-talk, doesn't it? "I'm going to the Father, yet I'm going to send the Comforter. He's with you. He will be in you. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." Does that sound confusing?

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian. Through the Spirit of God, Jesus Christ dwells and lives in me. The Bible says clearly in Romans chapter 8, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." There is no such thing as being saved and then receiving the Holy Spirit. You receive the Holy Spirit when you're saved. You're baptized by the Spirit into one body, and you've all been made to drink into one Spirit. It's one thing to have the Spirit as resident; however, it's another thing to have Him as president when you begin to obey. Listen. When you see God's wonderful program, when you believe God's great promise, when you assume the great practice

of obedience, you're going to know incredible power, because Jesus Christ will be living in you. He says here in this passage, "I will send you another Comforter."

Now, the word Comforter is the Greek word *paraclete*. I know that blesses you to hear that, but let me tell you what it means. *Kletos* means called; *para* means alongside of, like parallel lines. The Holy Spirit is somebody that God has called to be alongside of you. You're never alone. The loneliest road, the darkness night, He is with you. That's the *paraclete*. He is the one that represents the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and in us, and through us, the blessed *paraclete*. And notice He says, Jesus said, "And I will give you another *paraclete*, another Comforter." Now, in the Greek language—forgive me. I don't want to get too technical, but this is very important—there are two words for another. One means another of a different kind. The other means another of the same kind.

Now, if I have a Bible here and I say, 'I'm going to get me another Bible, and I get a different translation, that's another of a different kind. But if I wear this one out, and I say, "I want another just like it," it's another of the same kind. Now, what our Lord is saying is, "I'm with you. I'm going to give you another Comforter. He's not going to be different. He is the same. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." Now, don't miss this.

You see, in a Christian, Christ lives again. There's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life. What's His name? Jesus. If it's lived in your house, in your shop, in your club, it'll be Jesus. It's not that we are little imitators of Jesus. No. He is in us. The only way the Christian life is going to be lived in me is for me to be crucified with Christ, and say, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but—what?—Christ lives in me."

Stuart Briscoe, a great preacher, said, "When I got saved, I was so happy in the Lord Jesus. My burden of sin had been lifted. I had the Bible, and I said, 'Oh, this is wonderful.'" Then he bumped his nose a couple of times, like we do as new Christians, and we find out that it's not all honey and no bees. He said, "Well, this is difficult." Then after a while, as he stumbled and fell, and stumbled and fell, and read the Bible, he said, "This is impossible." And then, when he discovered that Christ is in us doing it, he said, "This is wonderful."

Now, folks, listen. That's just not a play on words. You remember over there, he said in verse 13, I believe, "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it?" He didn't say you will do it. He said, "I will do it." When we pray in His name, His authority enters into us. His Spirit enters into us. And what happens is that the Jesus in us is doing the same works, only in a greater way. How does He do it in a greater way? He says, "If I go away, you'll do greater works than these. Greater works than these that I do shall ye do; because I go to my Father." Well, what happened when Jesus ascended and went to the Father? He sent the Holy Spirit. Now, He said in John chapter 16: "It is expedient for

you that I go away.” Do you know what that means? Better.

Most of us would like to have been here when Jesus was here. “Oh,” we say, “man, if I could have only been with Jesus, heard Jesus teach, if Jesus had only touched me, if I could have been with Jesus, how much more wonderful that would have been.” No, it wouldn’t. Jesus said, “It is better for you that I go away—better, better, better.” Not worse—“better that I go away, because if I go away, I will not leave you comfortless. I will send the Holy Spirit. I will come to you.” But what is the difference? When Jesus was here in His flesh, if He was in this place, He couldn’t be in that place. Mary and Martha said to Him, “Lord, if you’d been here, my brother would not have died.” That is, “Lord, you’re somewhere else when we need you.” But through the Holy Spirit—listen—all there is of Jesus lives in you, and all there is of Jesus lives in me. And we’ll never have to say, “Jesus, I wish You were here,” or, “If You had been here, Lord.” No, He is here. Folks, are you understanding this? Are you listening?

Christ is alive and well living in the believer. “And the works that I do,” Jesus said, “you’ll do, and greater.” Why greater? Because there are more of us! All over the world, Jesus now, in His mystical body, is preaching and teaching. He was here in His physical body in a little limited space. Now, in His mystical body, He’s all over the world. Greater works.

My heart’s desire and prayer for Bellevue Baptist Church is that we will understand this, take it into our heart, into our lives—listen—and millions will come to Jesus through the witness of this one church. Millions! You say that’s impossible. No, it’s not. It is not, because you win someone, who will win someone, who will win someone, who will win someone. You’re here. She’s there. He’s over here. We’re, all of us, sharing the Lord Jesus Christ.

If Bellevue ceases to be a soul-winning missionary church, it’s not worthy of the ground upon which the buildings stand. A church exists by evangelism like a fire exists by burning.

Conclusion

God has a great plan for us. God has a great future for this church. It doesn’t depend upon who’s the pastor. “The works that I do you’ll do, and greater works than these will you do; because I go to my Father.” If you’re a believer, as a believer, He’s going to send the Holy Spirit to you.

You’re going to see the program. You’re going to pray the prayer. You’re going to take up the practice, which is obedience. And you’re going to receive the power. And God’s going to do something wonderful.

Now, He doesn’t do this to all of us corporately; He does it individually. Now, here’s

the question I want to ask you this morning—or I want you to ask you: If every member of this church were just like me, what kind of a church would this church be? Now, if you're looking for a mighty movement of the Spirit of God in Bellevue Baptist Church, beloved, it's got to start with you.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you pray for this dear church. Would you pray that we might learn to do the works of Jesus and greater works, that God would always keep this church true to the gospel! Now, when you pray that, say, "Lord, help me to be part of it," don't be a hypocrite and pray that somebody will do something that you yourself are not willing to do. Now, I know that you have individual gifts. I don't want to intimidate you. Some of us are not gifted to go out and knock on doors. Others cannot sing or preach. But, you see, there's somebody who needs our Savior. If each one of us in this building were to bring just one soul to Jesus, that would be more people who came to Jesus in His entire earthly ministry—greater works. Would you say, "Lord, lay some soul upon my heart and win that soul through me. Lord, give me a heartbeat for precious, lost souls. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're here today and you're not certain that you're saved—I've been talking to God's children—if you'd like to get in on this, you've got to be saved. You've got to believe on Jesus. This promise is predicated to those who believe on Him. Would you like to be saved? Would you? Would you like to know that your sin is forgiven? Would you like to know that you have a purpose in life, being a part of something great—the family of God and the program of God? Would you like to have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in your heart? Would you like to know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, when you die, you're going to heaven? Well, the price for your sin has been paid with the blood of Jesus. Jesus took your sin and mine to the cross, took our judgment, took our punishment, paid our debt, with His blood. But that doesn't do us any good, if we neglect it or reject it. It only increases our judgment. But the Bible says clearly and plainly, "For by faith we're justified." Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and we'll be saved. If you're willing to pray a prayer like this: "Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. Lord, I want to be saved. I turn from my old way. I'm tired of it. I turn to You, Lord. Come into my life and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Lord, I'm weak. Start with me where I am and make me what You want me to be. I just yield myself to You today. Come into my life. Be my Savior, my Lord, my God, and my King. Thank You for doing it, Jesus. Amen."

Now, look up here. If you really meant that, if you really meant that, first of all, when you said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, and I trust You to do so," He did it. He cannot lie. He will not lie. You say, "I didn't feel anything." The Bible doesn't say you're to feel anything. You can if you want to. As far as I know, the word feeling is only used

twice in the entire New Testament, and neither one of those times does it have anything to do with knowing that you're saved. The Bible says believe on Christ. Did you believe on Him? Did you trust Him? Did you say, "Thank You, Lord; I trust You to do what You said, and You cannot lie"?

Now, if you did that, begin to thank Him for it. The next thing you need to do is to make it open and public. Now, walking an aisle doesn't save anybody, but it is great evidence that you have been saved. Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you." Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before the Father." You know, if I could stand on the tallest building in this world with a megaphone that could be heard around the world and say, I love Jesus, I would do it. You see, those of us who are saved and believe that He suffered, bled, and died for us, we want to let others know. We want to bring joy to the church. We want to give Him glory. So we're going to stand and sing in a moment. Now, listen carefully.

If you prayed that prayer with me, or you still need some more help in praying that prayer, I'm going to ask you to come forward. If you prayed it and got it settled—I don't mean just saying words—but if you got it settled, I want you to come forward and tell the minister, "I'm trusting Christ." Now, if you still need some help, you come and say, "Look, I don't have it settled, but I want Jesus." We have an open Bible, and we'll guide you in this decision.

Now, in a moment, when we sing this invitation hymn, it says, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now." And when we say that, I want you to leave your seat and come. Say to the minister, "I'm trusting Christ," or, "I need to be saved," whichever the case may be, and we'll guide you in that decision. We'll be courteous. We'll be kind. We'll rejoice with you.

Now, there are others of you who need a church home. You're saved, but you're not a member here. If this is where you worship and where you attend, most likely, where God speaks to you, it's most likely where you should belong. Now, so if you're saved and need a church home, I want you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here." Now, if you haven't had believer's baptism, as we understand it, you need to be baptized. We'll make an appointment for your baptism. But if you're saved and know it, I want you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here."

Now, standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister to welcome those of you who'll be coming. If you're in the balcony, I've asked someone to stand under that banner over there that says Redeemer and this one over here that says Messiah, and somebody will be there waiting to welcome you and receive you. So those in the balcony on this side, you just move that way; others move this way. Those of you who are on the ground floor, you just step out and come down here. Our deacons are

going to come as prayer partners. Our staff will be here at the head of each aisle. If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful it is to see one friend bring another friend to Christ and His church.

Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave, that we all be in a spirit of prayer. Let's stand together. Bow your heads. Father God, we pray now as we sing that, Lord, You would open hearts, that, Lord God, we lay our pride in the dust. This is Your work. Bring the lost to Jesus, and give us all as a church a burden for the lost, that we might be praying during this invitation. And, Lord, give us brothers and sisters in fellowship that You've ordained. In Your holy name. Amen.

You step out and come now as we sing right now.

Missions Impossible

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 1, 1998

Main Scripture Text: John 14:12

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

JOHN 14:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. An Expanded Program of Missions
- II. The Explosive Power of Missions
- III. The Explicit Promise of Missions
- IV. The Expected Practice of Missions

Conclusion

Introduction

Find John chapter 14, and in just a moment, we’re going to look at verse 12. There was a program on television that I confess I used to love to watch. It was called Mission Impossible. Any of you ever watch Mission Impossible? Let me see your hands. That’s most of us. Good evening, Mr. Phelps. The assignment we have for you is da da da da da da da. If you choose to take this assignment... You remember it. And then, the tape would self-destruct, and he would be given some task to do that, from the human viewpoint, absolutely, totally impossible, but it would be done. I want to talk to you tonight about “Missions Impossible.”

It may seem impossible, but by God’s grace, and for God’s glory, it shall be done. One of the most astounding verses in all of the Bible is found in John chapter 14 and verse 12. Listen to it. Jesus is speaking. And He begins by saying, in the King James Version, “Verily, verily...”—now, when He says that, that means pay attention, pay attention. It literally means amen, amen—listen carefully—“...I say unto you...” Now, Jesus is putting all of the emphasis of His person behind this incredible statement. Pay attention. Pay attention. And I might say parenthetically, “Your sovereign Lord and master is saying unto you.” And just put it down in your heart and put it this way—Jesus, tonight, is saying to me, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also...”—ha, that would be astounding enough. But listen to the next part of this statement—“...and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father.”

Now, not only did Jesus say we would equal the works that He does and that He did, but we would exceed the works that He did. Can you imagine that Jesus is saying that? “He that believeth on me.” How many of you, tonight, believe on Jesus? Let me see your hands. Okay, He’s talking to you. You know, there’re only two categories of people in the world: believers and unbelievers, right? Saints and the ain’ts. Now, you’re one or the other. So you say, “I’m a believer in Jesus.” Now, I don’t want to embarrass you by asking the next question. How many of you equal and exceed the works of Jesus? Well, now, who’s wrong? You or Jesus? Now, He said, “When you believe on me, the works that I do you will do, and greater works than these will you do, because I go to my Father.” Well, something is wrong here. Maybe we’re just unbelieving believers. Now, I don’t want us to tone this verse down to our level of living. But what I want us to do is to bring our level of living up to this verse. All right? I don’t want us to say, “Well, that couldn’t be true,” because it is true. I don’t want us to blow past it, because it is important. I don’t want us to water it down, because it can’t be watered down. This is a mission impossible, yet it is possible. And we’re going to look at it tonight to see what it has to say to us tonight.

I. An Expanded Program of Missions

Now, first of all, what our Lord is talking about here is an expanded program of missions. That’s what our Lord is talking about: an expanded program of missions. When Jesus said, “Greater works than these that I do will you do,” what is He talking about? He fed five thousand. Does that mean you’re going to feed ten thousand with a little lad’s lunch? He walked on water. Does that mean you’re going to fly through the air? Jesus raised the dead. How are you going to do greater than that? Jesus did not say, greater miracles than I do will ye do. You can’t do greater miracles than Jesus did. You can’t. I mean, what can be greater than raising the dead? No, Jesus is saying, “Greater works.” “Greater works than these that I do will ye do.”

Now, He’s not talking about going around and raising the dead. As a matter of fact, when I die, don’t raise me. Leave me alone. I mean, I’m like the hippie who said, “Don’t dig me. I’m really gone.” I don’t want you to raise me when I die. Let me rest in peace and stay in glory. Jesus will raise me in His time. What is He talking about? Well, let me give you some Scripture. Now, you’re in the Gospel of John. Just go back to John chapter 5 here for a moment, and let’s look for a moment. Begin in verse 20, if you will. John chapter 5 and verse 20—here’s the clue: “For the Father loveth the Son...”—now, the Father, of course, is Almighty God, the Son is Jesus—“and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.” There’s our word “greater works” again. He—God the Father—will show God the Son greater works than these miracles. That’s what He’s talking about. “For as the Father

raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them...”—that’s raising the dead. God the Father has opened the grave, and brought the dead from life—“so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” Now, the Lord Jesus is saying, just as God raised the physical dead, I give spiritual life, as we’re going to see, to whom I will. “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” Now, watch the greater works that Jesus is doing greater than raising the dead literally: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” Now, what’s He talking about now? He’s talking about salvation. He’s talking about hearing the Gospel. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” This is the greater work. Greater than raising the dead is leading a soul to Jesus Christ. I don’t know whether you believe that or not, but that is absolutely true. Giving a person eternal life, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is greater than raising the dead. And, by the way, I’d rather have the power to lead souls to Christ than to raise dead bodies from the grave. I had, beyond the shadow of any doubt—it is greater. Eternal life is a greater work than being raised from the dead. You see, it refers here not to when Jesus said, “Greater works than these that I do.” He’s not talking now, first of all, about greater miracles; He’s talking about salvation.

Now, you’re in John chapter 5; go back to John chapter 4, and look, if you will, in verse 34—seems like we’re going backward, doesn’t it? But we are. All right, look in verse 34: “Jesus saith unto them, My meat”—that is, my food—“is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” See, Jesus came to earth; He had a work to do. Jesus did not come as a miracle worker. Jesus did not come to walk on water, though He did. Jesus did not come to raise the dead, though He did. Jesus did not come to feed the multitudes, though He did.

What was the work the Jesus came to earth to do? Now, remember, we’re still tracking on this word “greater works”—greater works, okay? I’ll give you some verses. Go on over now to John 17, and look with me, if you will. Let me hear the pages turning. John 17, verse 1, and continue to read: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come;”—He’s talking now about His death—“glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give”—now, here’s the key; watch it—“eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth:

I have finished”—here’s our word again—“the work that thou gavest me to do.”

What is the work that Jesus came to do? He’s talking about salvation. I hope, by now, you agree with what I’m saying. When Jesus said, “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do,” He’s not talking about greater miracles. That is, there’s no way possible we can do greater miracles than Jesus did; even if we had the miracle working power that Jesus had, we still couldn’t do greater than Jesus did. But Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Now, what is happening is this: that Jesus is saying, “As my Father has sent me, even so send I you.” But He is saying, really, that you are going to do greater work than I did. That is, we’re going to be able to bring many more people to Jesus Christ than Jesus, Himself, brought to Himself when He was here in the flesh in this robe of flesh, upon this celestial globe.

When He says, “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do,” He’s not talking about greater in quality; He’s talking about greater in quantity. Now, go back to John chapter 4 again, and let’s begin again in verse 34, and look at it. Now, Jesus said—watch this—Jesus said, My food—“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” And now, He begins to talk to us. Now, listen carefully. Here’s where it gets to be mission impossible for those of us who are missionaries. “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages...”—and, by the way, God has a special reward, special remuneration for His soul winners, His harvesters, His missionaries—“he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.” Now, who is the one who sowed? The Lord Jesus. Who is the one who’s going to do the reaping? We are, and we’re going to rejoice with Jesus. And verse 37: “And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.” Now, notice verse 38: “I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour;”—that is, you didn’t put the seed in the ground; you didn’t plow, you didn’t fertilize, you didn’t send the moisture—“other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.” Now, what Jesus is saying is this: “I began; others have cultivated; now it is time for you to go and reap.” We—Adrian, Bob, Jim, Webb, the choir, the deacons, the counselors, our missionaries—we are to be reaping the harvest that Jesus began. Jesus sowed the seed; we reap the harvest. And Jesus is just simply saying, “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do.”

You see, listen. More people were converted one day at Pentecost than Jesus saw converted in all of His ministry. Think about it. More people were converted in one day at Pentecost than Jesus saw converted in all of His ministry. “Greater works than these that I do will ye do because I go to my Father.” And, of course, when He went to His

Father's, we're going to see the Holy Spirit come on the day of Pentecost. That's exciting, isn't it?

You know, these are better days than when Jesus was here on earth in the flesh. A man was up in Washington, D.C., I'm told, and he had a cab driver driving him around, and they passed one of these government buildings, and on the front, on the faade, it had this motto: "The Past is Prologue." The man asked the cab driver, "What does that mean?" He said, "Well, that is Washingtonian talk for you ain't seen nothing yet." And, we haven't. The best days were not those Bible days. The best days are now.

II. The Explosive Power of Missions

Now, we're talking about the expansive program. Now, the second thing I want you to notice is the explosive power, because with this mission impossible, if Jesus says we're going to do more, "Greater works than I have done you're going to do." Well, how are we going to do it? We don't have what it takes. Do we have what Jesus had? No. But, wait a minute—yes. Go back now to John chapter 12, where we started, and begin continue to read with me now in John 14, verse 12. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do,"—now, here's the key; watch it now—"because I go unto my Father." Now, He doesn't mean that we're going to upstage Him, that we know how to do it in a better way than He did, that we have more savoir-faire, that we have more ability, that we have more strength. No. But watch it. Jesus is still going to be doing these greater works, but now He's going to be doing them through us. Continue to read in verse 13: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name,"—what are the next four words?—"that will I do." He's still going to be doing it. He goes to the Father, we begin to pray, and Jesus continues to work. "That will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. For if ye shall ask any thing in my name,"—watch it,—"I will do it. And if ye love me,"—if ye love me—"keep my commandments." Now, watch this: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,"—that means somebody called along side, a paraclete—"that he"—the Comforter—"may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth..."—now, who's He talking about here? the Holy Spirit? Yes. But now watch very carefully—"even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Now, Jesus was right there with them. He said, "You know Him, because He's with ye." Jesus is now talking about Himself. Now, notice in verse 18: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Well, Jesus, make up your mind. Is it going to be the Spirit, or is it going to be You? Yes. Yes.

Let me give you the definition of the Holy Spirit: Christ in the Christian—Christ in the Christian. He says, "Look, I'm going to the Father. Yet, the One who is with you will be

in you.” He will abide with you. “If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it.” Now, it doesn’t sound so impossible, does it?

You see, there’s the expanded program. And then, there is the explosive power of the Lord Jesus Christ in Him, in us. You see, I want you to just turn over to John chapter 16 and verse 7. Here’s something that will really bless you. Most of us don’t believe this, but we need to believe it, because it’s absolutely true. Jesus is saying this—look: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter”—now, He’s talking about the Holy Spirit—“will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” Now, most of us have some sort of a romanticized idea, saying, “Boy, it sure would be good to have been back there in the days of Jesus, in the days of His flesh.” Well, that’s not what He said. Jesus said, “You’re better off without me here.” The word expedient means better. It is expedient for you. “It is better for you that I go to my Father.” Because He said, “If I don’t go to my Father, I cannot send the Holy Spirit to you.” It is far better that Jesus is not here in His flesh. It is better. It is better. It is better.

Remember in John chapter 11 when Lazarus got sick, and Martha said to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, if you had just been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.” Well, none of us ever have to say, “Now, Lord, if you had just been here”—He is here. He is here. And every place where there’s one of those flags, He is there. Friend, because the Holy Spirit is come, every Christian has the Holy Spirit in his heart, in her heart, and we don’t have to say, “Lord, I wish You were here.” He is here. He’s in me. He’s in you. And the wonderful thing is, I have all of God there is to have in me, but you have all of God there is in you. And we don’t have to say, “Well, if He’s with me, He can’t be with you; if He’s over here, He can’t be over there.” That’s why the Lord Jesus says, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” I have all of Jesus there is. And so do you have all of Jesus there is. I have my own personal Savior in my heart. You have your own personal Savior in your heart.

Now, let me just tell you about this mission impossible. Now, don’t forget we’re in the Gospel of John, primarily John 14:12, but fast-forward to the Book of Acts chapter 1. Let me show you how this works out. Now, remember, we’re talking about a mission impossible. We’re talking about taking the Gospel around the world. Acts 1, verses 1 and 2: “The former treatise...”—you know what a treatise is; it’s a book—“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus,”—there was a man named Theophilus. Some wag said, “That the awfulest name I ever heard.” His name was Theophilus—“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all”—now, watch it—“that Jesus began both to do and teach.” Now, who wrote the Book of Acts? Luke. And Luke was a doctor, a medical doctor. And that shows us you don’t have to check your brains at the door to be a Christian. Thank God for the Christian physicians who are members of this church.

Who, I tell you, we've got some of the greatest doctors in the world as members of this church, and they're Bible-thumpers too. They believe the Bible is the Word of God. And Luke, who wrote this, had already written the Gospel of Luke. He called that the former treatise, and now he is writing the Book of Acts. But notice what he said: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach." Now, the inference is clear. The Book of Acts is what Jesus is continuing to do and teach. Now, you see—listen—when Jesus was here in the Gospels, He was here in His literal body. In the Book of Acts, He's here in His mystical body. He's still doing it. The mystical body of Jesus is the Church. We are the Church. Christ is in us. And what Jesus began to do and teach in the Gospels, Jesus is continuing to do and teach in the Church. Only He doesn't have one body now; His body is all over the earth. And there are representations of His body—individuals and corporate groups—all over the world. And so, He could say, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do." Because, you see, this is the continuing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus' ministry now is going to be brought to culmination. The work that He has begun will be completed through His church, His mystical body. Now, the point that I'm making is this: we've talked about the expansive program, greater works, but also the explosive power. Jesus said, "Greater works than these that I do will ye do, if you believe on me, because I go to my Father." I'm going to send the Holy Spirit of God. And so, He did not just leave us alone and give us a mission impossible. He says now, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it." Jesus is still doing it. Remember what I've told you—there's only one person that has ever lived the Christian life. What's His name? Jesus. And if He's living it today, He's still living it in me. He's still living it in you. It's not that He tells us to go out and be like Him; it is that He is in us. Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth that in me, and the life I now live I live by the power, I live by the faith of the Son of God that loved me and gave Himself for me." So, Jesus is still writing the Book of Acts. Now, I don't mean literally, but you know—it ends in chapter 28—but we're the 29th chapter. I mean, it's still going on. By the way, I looked at my Bible here, and it says up here, "The Acts of the Apostles." Remember, that's not the inspired part; the printer just put that on there. That's not the acts of the apostles. That's not even the acts of the Holy Spirit. It's the acts of Jesus, what Jesus is still doing. "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." Jesus is alive and well in His church today. And so, when He gives us this mission impossible with this expanded program, and He says, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do because I go to my Father," He doesn't just say, "All right, just get out there and tough it up." He says, "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." I, through the Holy Spirit, am in you to energize you and empower you. Isn't that great?

III. The Explicit Promise of Missions

Now, we've talked about the expansive program. We've talked about the explosive power. Now, I want you to see the explicit promise. Now, go back to our text again in John chapter 14 with me, and look at it again, and see the promise that He's going to make now. He tells us to do it. Now, here's the explicit promise, beginning in verse 12 again: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." Now, here's the explicit promise: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." And, by the way, that's the only way that you can ask in His name that God be glorified in the Son. You, that ask in His name, doesn't mean that I just tack His name onto the fact that I want a swimming pool in my backyard. In Jesus name, amen. No. No. Unless it would glorify the Father for you to have one. Now, what I'm trying to say is to ask in Jesus' name means that the Father may be glorified in the Son. "If ye ask anything in My name, I will do it." Now, that is an explicit promise. Now, notice verse 12 and 13 are linked together. Verse 12 says, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do." And then, it says, "and." You see the conjunction there? These two verses are linked together. They don't stand separate. And the greater works come with the explicit promise of answered prayer.

Now, we need to pray. I need to pray more. You need to pray more. We need to pray more. And, by they way, Christians around the world, and especially in America, are beginning today forty days of prayer, led by Bill Bright and others, called "Pray USA 98." And, we're setting aside, and believers are setting aside, the next forty days for prayer and fasting. It is my purpose to fast at least one day a week during those times. Perhaps more. But I would like for you to say, "I will fast and pray for the next forty days." "I will fast and pray." You may fast from a meal, two meals. You may fast a day, a week. You may fast a week. Or you may want to fast for forty days. You may want to fast with just taking water. Or maybe you want to fast for vegetable juices or fruit juices. But I want us to get serious about this matter of praying, because, folks, mission impossible is inextricably interwoven with prayer. Jesus said, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do, because I go to my Father, and if you will ask anything in My name, I will do it." The fact that He dwells in us does not mean that He's going to work in us and through us, until we begin to pray.

Now, learn this about prayer: prayer is not preparation for work, and prayer is not a substitution for work, but prayer is the work. The prayer is the work. When we pray, and prayer is hard work; it is difficult. If I were to ask you, "Do you believe that Jesus will do greater works in you when you pray?" you would say, "Yes." But if I were to ask you to stand up and tell us, tonight, about your prayer life, you might be ashamed. Now, most of us need to get serious about this matter of prayer. Now, we can do a lot of things

without prayer. The pyramids were probably built without prayer; I mean, without Bible prayer. They might have been praying to the sun god or something. You know, you can give to the world mission offering without praying. You can attend church without prayer. You can sing in the choir without prayer. You can sit on the platform, or preach, without prayer. It's even easier to attend prayer meeting than it is to pray. But, we need to get serious about the matter of prayer, now, don't we? Don't we? I say, "Don't we?" Yes, we do. We do. We really do. You see, this is the explicit promise. And the devil will try to keep me, you, us, from doing, he will get us to do anything but to pray. But mission impossible means that we pray, because all things are possible to the man, the church, the woman, the boy, the girl that knows how to pray. And, you see, we must pray as a believer. He that believeth in me, verse 12, "the works that I do shall he do." And we pray in the name of Jesus. Notice again verse 13: "In whatsoever ye shall ask in my name." Look again in verse 14: "If ye ask anything in My name, I will do it." Turn over to John chapter 15 and look with me, if you will, in verse 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain"—now, here's the key to this bringing forth fruit—"that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, that he may give it you." Go in chapter 16, and look, if you will, in verse 23: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Look in chapter 16 and verse 26: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say—and I say—not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you." Now, what is He saying? Over and over again, He's saying, it is in My name. It is in My name. Now, what it means to ask in the name of Jesus is that the Father may be glorified in the Son. I mean, are we praying for the world to come to know the Lord Jesus? Because, you see, "herein is my Father glorified that ye may bear much fruit." He wants fruit. He wants people to come to Jesus Christ. And this is an explicit promise: "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." He didn't say, "You will have to do it." He said, "I will do it." He will do it in you and through you, and it's just glorious and wonderful when you see God begin to do what we cannot do, because Christ is alive and well in us.

But this explicit promise is linked to prayer. You know that to pray in Jesus name means with His authority. If you write a check, you put your name on it. And the name stands for the person, so, when that check is carried to the bank, it's like you were standing there, and saying, "This is my money; give it to me." Because your name is on there. If it's a bad check, they don't put the check in jail; they put you in jail. Because that name on the check—that stands for you. Now, what Jesus is saying: "You bring me into it. You put my name on it. I then do it, because you ask in my name."

So many of us are misusing the name of Jesus. The name stands for authority. If a policeman stands up in front of a truck, he says, "Stop, in the name of the law." He

doesn't stop that truck with his power. He might weigh 180 pounds. An 18-wheeler truck stops, because he has the badge on. He says, "Stop, in the name of the law." He may go to a wild party in some apartment house where it has all kind of raucous noise, and he may go to investigate. He may think there are drugs inside. He knocks on the door, and he says, "Open, in the name of the law." But he doesn't go to his next-door neighbor and say, "In the name of the law, may I borrow your ax?"

You see, we ask in the name of Jesus, with the authority of Jesus. Is all this making sense? And this is a mission impossible that becomes possible when we understand what Jesus wants us to do.

IV. The Expected Practice of Missions

Now, here's the fourth and final thing tonight about this mission impossible. I want you to see not only the expanded program, and the explosive power, and the explicit promise; but the expected practice. Now, what is the expected practice? Well, look in verse 15. You're in John 14—look, if you will, in verse 15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And then, fast-forward to verse 23: "Jesus answered, and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Now, the person who does these greater works is the person who is filled with the Spirit, who knows how to pray, and who is obedient, and keeps His commandments. Now, what has He commanded us to do? Acts 1:8 says this: "And ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Now, that is Jesus' program for the whole church, for the whole age—is bringing souls to Jesus. We are to be a witness. If you're not a witness, you're not right with God. I don't care what else you do. I don't care how circumspectly you walk. I care not how faithfully you attend. I care not liberally you give. I care not how eloquently you preach. I care not how beautifully you sing. Folks, the Lord says, "If you love me, you'll keep my commandments." The Great Commission has been given by our Lord. He says, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," not witnesses of our own denomination, not witnesses of some doctrine—a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the word witness—I want to tell you this, in all honesty, the word witness and the word martyr are the same word in the Greek language. A martyr is somebody who dies for Jesus. But, you see, physical death doesn't make martyrs; it just reveals martyrs. It just reveals them. You're already a martyr. You're saying, "Lord, I die to my ambition. I die to myself. I die to my future. I die to my own will. I belong to you. You died for me. I died with you. You sent your Spirit to live in me. And if I love you, I'll keep your word." Now, we're not all going. We begin in

Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and in the outermost part of the earth. That's the reason I'm so grateful for this missionary program; we call it a World Missions and Evangelism Conference, because somehow we get the idea that there is a difference between missions and evangelism. No, listen. A missionary's zeal that is concerned about people across the ocean and not concerned about people across the street is a religious farce. It's a religious farce. You begin in Jerusalem, and Judea, and Samaria. You begin in Cordova. You begin in Whitehaven. You begin in Frayser. You begin in East Memphis. You begin where you live. If you're not a soul winner now, don't you dare waste somebody's money to go overseas. You think putting 2,000 miles of ocean between you and here is going to make you a soul winner? No. Friend, you begin now to bring souls to Jesus Christ where you are. This is the program. I'm not saying that you're not to go. You may go. But there is an expected practice, and it may cost. There's no cheap way, no easy way.

Conclusion

Now, Jesus is just talking to ordinary people, when He says, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do." There are fisherman, people just like us. They lived in skin just like we do. They breathe the same kind of air we breathe. And He took ordinary men, ordinary women, and gave them extraordinary power.

Dr. Pearson said this: "Witnessing is a necessity for a truly saved soul. A light that does not shine, a spring that does not flow, a seed that does not grow is no more strange than a life in Christ that does not witness for Christ."

Though, folks, what is it? What shall we have? What will we do? Are we going to play church, or are we going to get serious about bringing souls to Christ? This morning, we preached, and in the 9:30 service, we saw a great number come, and at 11:00, we saw almost a landslide of souls coming; but, folks, that's only a handful. Just look around at the people in this building tonight. Think about this building, almost filled twice this morning, what would happen, what would happen—I say—what would happen if we began to believe the Word of God? "He that believeth on me, the works that I do, he will do." "And greater works than these, you'll do."

Jesus' missionary program has not failed; it just hasn't been tried. And, folks, hey, I'm talking to me. I stand before you convicted by these verses. I am. So, let's get serious, and let's remember that He knows our frame. He knows our weakness. He didn't say, "You will do it." He said, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." He'll do it, and He'll get the glory, and we'll get the joy. Amen? Amen.

Let's bow our heads together in prayer. Would you say, "Now Lord, I asked you to speak to me before this service, and to say to me, Lord..." or you said, "Lord, say to me

whatever you want to say.” Now, there are two ways to listen to a sermon. One way is to try to get the outline and the preacher’s thoughts. There’s another way to listen to a sermon, and that’s to say, “Lord, what did you just say to me? What did you just say to me?” Why don’t you think about that for just a few moments? “Lord, what did you just say to me?” Not, “What did Adrian say? Lord, what did you just say to me, to my heart?” Now, if God told you something to do, you have a choice to say yes or no. I’ll say yes, Lord, yes, to your will and to your way. Just say yes. Say, “Lord, you know that I’m in the flesh. I mean, I live in a fleshly body, and I don’t have any great strength of my own, but Lord I make myself available to you.” I believe right now that God is calling out some in this congregation to lifetime missions, overseas, or somewhere across America, in some spot where the Gospel is needed, in a very special way, and He may be speaking to you about that right now. Just say yes to Him. And I’m going to give you a chance to make that public in just a moment. Maybe God is speaking to you about what He wants you to give in the world missions offering. He may want you to give some fantastic sum, something so great that it’s just frightening to you, but you have it to give. If you give it, you’ll never miss another meal anyway. You’ll still have as many clothes to wear—or maybe you won’t—but He just may be challenging you with a gift, greatest world missions gift you’ve ever given. God may be telling you what you saw over there in the expo, that trip maybe to Central America, that trip maybe to South America, some other thing, maybe a ministry in the inner city. Maybe God is saying, “You know, that’s what you are cut out to do. That’s what you really ought to be doing.” And you just need to say, “Yes, Lord, yes.” Well, I’m going to stop talking. You just sit there for a while, and just be saying yes to the Lord for a minuteF then we’ll have an invitation. ¶

The Believer's Secret of Success

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 31, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 14:12

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

JOHN 14:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. What Are the Works Jesus Is Talking About?
- II. Who Is Going to Do This?
- III. How Does This Come to Pass?

Conclusion

Introduction

John chapter 14. I want to talk to you tonight about, “The Believer’s Secret of Success.” Now we have many churches that seem to be successful, and yet they’re not successful. That is, they operate, but they don’t operate. They perform, but they don’t perform. Let me illustrate what I’m talking about.

I heard one time about a man who was in his workshop at night, an elderly man, and he somehow cut his hand. And his wife said, “Well, you ought to go over there to the hospital and have them look at that.” And he said, “Well, I don’t know much about the hospital.” He said, “What should I do?” She said, “Just go to the emergency room and have them take a look at it.” So he went to the emergency room and he went in the front entrance, and he didn’t see anybody in the front entrance, just an empty room. And there were two doors. Above the one door it said, “Male.” Above the other door it said, “Female.” “Well,” he said, “I’m a male,” so he went through that door. And when he got in that room, it was just an empty room. And, no one was in there, just two more doors. One said, “Over 55.” The other said, “Under 55.” He said, “Well, I’m over 55, so he went through the next door. Nobody in that room, just two doors. One said, “Above the Waist,” or, “Below the Waist.” “Well, he said, “that’s above the waist, so he went through that door. And he just came into a big room, just two more doors. One said, “Major,” or, “Minor.” He said, “Well, I believe that’s minor, so he went through that door and found himself back out on the parking lot. He went home. His wife said, “Did they help you?” He said, “Well, I’m not quite certain, but one thing, they certainly were organized.”

Now I think a lot of churches are that way. You know, we can tell them exactly what category, what Sunday school class, so forth and so forth, but I wonder, as we process the people, as they come in one door, and as they go out the other door, I wonder, do we really, really help them? Do we do what our God commanded us to do? That's the reason the verse that I'm going to share with you so challenges me tonight. I want you to look at it. I say it's perplexing, but it is astronomical. "Verily, verily, I say unto you—now Jesus is speaking—he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go to my Father." My goodness. It would be one thing to say, "Lord, You expect me to do what You did? You raised the dead. You walked on water. You fed 5,000. But you didn't stop there, Lord. You said, "I'll do what you do," and then You said, "I will do greater works than You do. Not only will I equal what You did; I will exceed what You did, and what You do." Now, friend, I don't know whether that's a challenge to you or not, but it's a challenge to me.

Now there are only two categories of people here tonight basically: believers and unbelievers, right? So you're one or the other. You're a saint or an ain't. All right now, either you're a believer or you're an unbeliever. How many believers tonight? Let me see your hand? You're a believer. That's most of us. Okay, you're a believer. All right. So He's talking about you. Now look at it again. "Verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me—that's you, right? That's you. Say amen. Say, 'That's me'—the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do."

Now question: How many of you tonight are doing the works that Jesus did and are doing greater works than Jesus did? Now don't answer that one. Don't lift your hand. But you, you said, "I'm a believer." You said, "I am a believer." And Jesus said, "A believer, someone who believes on Me, will do what I do and he'll do greater than I do. Now that brings up a problem. You say, "I'm a believer, but I'm not doing what Jesus did. I'm certainly not doing greater works than Jesus did." Well, now, who's wrong: you or the Scripture? Well, you say, 'Pastor, I don't know how to answer that question. I know the Scripture is not wrong, but I know I'm not doing what the Scripture says I'm to do.' Well, therefore, rather than adjusting the Scripture to suit your experience, I think we really need to adjust your experience to suit Scripture. Don't you?

I've told you before about that battle where the flag got out ahead of the regiment and the sergeant said to the corporal, he said, "Shall we bring the flag back to the regiment?" He said, "No, bring the regiment up to the flag."

I think what we need to do is rather than bringing this Scripture back to our experience, we need to look at it tonight and see if we can bring our experience up to this Scripture. "The works that I do, you'll do, if you believe on Me." And then He said, "Greater works than these that I do will you do if you believe in Me."

Now let's just look at this Scripture tonight, slow down, and kind of take it apart a

little bit, and put it back together, and then get a blessing. Now, let's just ask those analytical questions.

I. What Are the Works Jesus Is Talking About?

First of all, and the key question is the question what, what. What are the works that Jesus Christ is talking about? I mean, when Jesus said, "The works that I do shall ye do, and greater works than these," what does that mean? Does that mean that Jesus fed 5,000; I'm to feed 10,000? Greater works. Jesus walked on water. Well, does that mean I'm to do greater works; I'm to fly through the air? Greater works than these that Jesus did Jesus raised the dead. How am I going to top that? Very frankly, listen. When I die, I don't want you raising me, okay. I mean, even if you can, you leave me alone. I'm like that hippy. He said, "Don't dig me, I'm really gone!" Just, just leave me alone. When I die, leave me alone! I don't want to be raised till Jesus raises me. But Jesus did raise the dead. What does this mean? I mean, greater works than these that I do will you do if you believe in Me." Well, let's just find out what He's talking about.

Now we're going to stay mostly in the gospel of John, but turn back to John chapter 5 for a moment and look, if you will, in verse 20. The question is, what is Jesus talking about here? All right. Now look in John chapter 5, verse 20 and I'm going to read through 24: "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth—that is, God the Father shows God the Son everything that God the Father does—and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." Now Jesus has just healed somebody who was paralyzed for 38 years, and now Jesus is talking about something greater, greater than healing someone paralyzed—"...greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." Do you know what the word quickeneth means? It means, "give life." The Bible describes two categories of person: the quick and the dead. That is, the living and the dead. In Memphis traffic, it also means the quick and the dead—"...the Son quickeneth whom he will." That is, Jesus gives life to whom He will. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." And that's one of the great proofs of the deity of Jesus Christ. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him." Now verse 24. Every time Jesus says something that's preceded by "Verily, verily," that really means, "give me your full attention." "Verily, verily; truly, truly; amen, amen, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

What is a greater work than healing a man who's been paralyzed for 38 years? It's very clear. Everlasting life! Eternal life. That is the greater work. And the greater works

that Jesus is talking about refer to salvation ministry.

Now look, if you will, in John, just go back to John chapter 4. Now you're in chapter 5. Look, if you will, in John chapter 4 and look in verse 34. You're going to find out why Jesus Christ came. Jesus saith unto them, My meat—that is, My lunch, My dinner, My food, that which satisfies Me, that which nourishes Me—is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish His—what?—His work.” Jesus said, “God sent Me with a job. And the thing that consumes Me, the thing that nourishes Me, the thing that satisfies Me, My food, My meat, is to do what He sent Me to do, to finish His work.”

Now turn to John 17, and look at the first few verses in John 17. The Lord Jesus is praying. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh—watch, watch—thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give—what?—eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” What is eternal life? It is knowing God through Christ. Verse 4: “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” Now Jesus said in John 4, “My meat is to do the work.” He says in John 17, “I've done it now. Redemption is complete. I have paid the price.”

Now His work was to glorify the Father by bringing souls into glory by giving to those souls eternal life. Now we are to do the same thing. When Jesus said, “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do,” Jesus was not talking about doing greater physical miracles. Jesus was not saying, “I fed 5,000; you feed 10,000.” Jesus was not saying, “I walked on water; you fly through air.” That's not what He's saying. He is saying, “I came to do a certain job. Greater is the work that you're to do than I'm to do.” But Jesus was not talking about greater in quality; He was talking about greater in quantity. He's not saying, “You are to do better work than I have done.” He is saying that, “You are going to do more than I have done.” And that's what our Lord is talking about.

Now go back to John chapter 4 again and let's, let me show you that—John chapter 4 and verse 34. You're in chapter 4. Look at it again. “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the field—we sang this—for they are white already to harvest.” And, Jim, thank God the Holy Spirit that led you to sing that song, or else that led me to preach this sermon, but at least we got together, “He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal—underscore that—that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.” Greater is the work of the one who reaps than the one who sows. And then Jesus said, “I sent you to reap that whereupon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are

entered into their labors.”

Now we are to reap the harvest of the seed that Jesus planted. That’s what we’re talking about. More people, for example, were converted on the Day of Pentecost in one day than were converted in all the three and a half years of Jesus’ ministry. Greater works than these that I do shall ye do that believe on me. And what our Lord is saying now is that it is time for a great, great, great harvest. “He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do.” What did Jesus do? He came that men might have eternal life. “And greater works than these shall he do.” So, the first question is what? And that is, bringing souls to glory. That is the job, the great commission, greater than any miracle.

Sometimes people want to know—do you believe in a miracle ministry? Well, yes and no. It all depends of what kind of a miracle you’re talking about.

Turn to John chapter 10 and verse 41. It speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it says, “And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle...” Now, who, which John is he talking about—the apostle John? No. He’s talking about John the Baptist.

Was John the Baptist a great man? Jesus said, “There was not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist.” That would be pretty good to have on your resume, right? “Not a greater born than John the Baptist.” Was John the Baptist Spirit-filled? Now we might ask, is Phil Spirit-filled, David Spirit-filled, Jim Spirit-filled? Well, Phil and David maybe. I mean, we say, “Well, yeah, I think so.” Or, is Adrian Spirit-filled? Well, I hope so. He’s our pastor. He acts Spirit-filled sometimes. Better ask Joyce. Is Adrian Spirit-filled? Well, we would say, “Yeah, I think he is.” Or maybe you say, “I don’t think he is.” Question: Was John the Baptist Spirit-filled? Beyond the shadow of any doubt! The Bible says that John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb. We don’t have to ask about it.

Now, was John the Baptist a great man? Yes. Who says so? Jesus. Was John the Baptist filled with the Holy Spirit? Yes. Who says do? The Bible. Did John the Baptist work any miracles? No. John the Baptist didn’t feed 5,000. John the Baptist didn’t raise the dead. John the Baptist didn’t heal anybody. John the Baptist, the greatest man born of woman according to Jesus Christ, who never performed a miracle, notice what is says about John the Baptist. “But all things that John spake of this man—what John said of Jesus—were true,” the people said, “and many believed on him—on Jesus—there.”

I’m telling you something, folks. I had rather have the ability to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in power than to raise the dead. You may not believe that, but God is listening to every word I say. I had rather have the power to preach Jesus Christ, to lead men to Jesus Christ, than to have power to raise the dead. Jesus said, “The works that I do shall ye do, and greater works than these.” He did not mean, “Go around and raising

more dead people than I did.” He meant bringing people to Me. John did no miracle, but many believed on him there.

What is the work that Jesus Christ is talking about? It is the work of bringing men, women, boys and girls bound in the golden chains of the gospel and laying them at Jesus’ feet. We are to reap the harvest that Jesus planted. In John chapter 4 He tells us about it.

II. Who Is Going to Do This?

Now, who is going to do this? Go back to our text now again, John 14. Let’s go back to where we started, John 14. Look in John 14 again: “Verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father.” You say, “Well, it’s very evident who’s going to be doing the works. It’s the believer.” Well, yes, but not necessarily. Let’s just continue to read, and look, if you will, in the next verse. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Now who’s going to do it: you or Jesus? The answer is yes. The answer is yes. You see, Jesus did not mean that we’re going to upstage Him. You say, “Well, Jesus, You only got hundreds saved. We got thousands saved. How about that?” No, no. We’re not going to upstage the Lord Jesus. When Jesus says you’re going to do greater works than these that I do, the secret is that He will still be doing it, but He will be doing it in us.

Now look and stay with me for a moment. You’ll get blessed if you’ll pay attention. Look, if you will, in verse 16 now. The Lord, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter—that is the word *paraclete*. That means someone who is called alongside. It’s come from two words: *para*, which means “alongside” like parallel lines, and *cleto*, which means “to call,” someone called alongside—that he may abide with you forever.” Now Jesus said, “Look, you’re going to do greater works than these that I do. But if you ask anything in my name, I’ll do it. You’ll do it. I’ll do it.” And then He says, “I’m going to give you the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is going to dwell in you.” Then look, if you will, in verse 18: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Now, wait a minute, Lord. You just said the Holy Spirit’s coming. He said, “That’s right, and it’s Me.” You see, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit are one. So who is the Holy Spirit? He’s Christ in the Christian. Does Jesus live in you? Well, how does He live in you? In a physical body? No, He lives by the Spirit. Jesus said, “I’ll not leave you comfortless [that means “helpless orphan”]; I will come to you.” And then look, if you will, in verse 20. He explains it. “At that today ye shall know that I am in my Father, ye in me, and I in you. I’m in the Father. You’re in Me. I’m in you.” Is this getting beyond you or is this interesting? I hope so. It’s talking about doing greater than Jesus did. Listen—listen.

Jesus said, “The works that I do, you’ll do.” And then Jesus said, “Greater works

than these that I do, you'll do." That deals with eternal life, bringing men to Christ. But then He says, "Yes, you'll do it," but He says in the next verse, "I'll do it." And then He says, "The Holy Spirit is coming. He'll be in you." But then He says, "I'll be in you and you're in Me." Now that's the way it continues to be done.

Now there are two words for another. Jesus said, "I will send you, I will give you another Comforter." Look in verse 16. In the Greek language there are two words for another. One means "another of a different kind," and the other means "another of the same kind."

Now, another of a different kind means a car is another kind of transportation than a horse. It's another of a different kind. But if you had a car and you liked it, and you bought another one just like it, you'd buy another of the same kind. And if you were using the word for another, you'd use two different words to describe which other kind of another you're talking about. Okay. Another of a different kind or another of the same kind. So you say, "I'm going to get another form of transportation," you'd use the word another, which means another of a different kind. But if you use the, the word for another that Jesus used here, you use the word for another of the same kind.

Now Jesus is saying, "I will send you another Comforter," that is, another of the same kind. "I'm going to send someone just like Me. I'm going to send someone just like Me." Well, of course He's just like Jesus because He is Christ, and Christ is the Spirit, and yet they are not identical, but they are inseparable.

Now Jesus says in verse 16 He's going to come to abide with you forever. Do you see that? Now the word abide there just means "to settle down." In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon people. That's the reason David prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." But in the New Testament, He comes to abide. He comes to dwell, to move in, never to move out again—see? And He is with you. Jesus said He will abide with you forever. He just settles down in your heart.

Well, question: Had you rather be Peter, James, and John, walking with Jesus, or had you rather be Jim, and David, and Phil, today in the 20th century? Which would you choose? Would you choose to walk this earth when Jesus Christ was here in sandaled feet, walking the shores of Galilee, or would you rather be a 20th-century Christian? Now if you're not a thinking person, or not theologically savant, you would say, "I had rather have been back there. How wonderful it would have been to live back there." Now the word abide there just means "to settle down." In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon people. That's the reason David prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." But in the New Testament, He comes to abide. He comes to dwell, to move in, never to move out again—see? And He is with you. Jesus said He will abide with you forever. He just settles down in your heart.

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Suppose Jesus were here tonight. Suppose I were to announce—now you talk about Super Sunday—suppose I were to say, "I've got a special guest here. Jesus Christ is here in human flesh." Now we'd get a crowd, I hope, if you believe me. "But Jesus Christ is here. I mean, He's going to make a guest appearance tonight in His physical body." Now that's not going to happen, but suppose it could; I mean, just suppose that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, were here. And I, I had Him back in my office, and at an appropriate time He's going to come out on the platform. Well, that would be something, wouldn't it? That'd be, that'd be something. I mean, Jesus is standing here in His resurrected body, or His pre-resurrected body. Let's put it that way. It would be better—His pre-resurrected body. He's here. Better for the illustration, I mean. All right. He's right here. You can see Him.

Now, after the service, everybody wants to come up and touch Him, right? Everybody wants, you'd want to shake hands with Him or something, wouldn't you? Kiss—I mean, you'd want to do something. You'd want to get close, right? You would. Sure, you would if He were here in His physical body. Now, at the close of the service what are we going to do? Well, I'll tell you. The pastor's going to pull rank. The pastor's going to say, "Jesus, come over to my house for supper tonight. Joyce has fixed something." And you say, "Now, wait a minute—that's not fair. Why should He go home with you? I want Him to go home with me." Or, "Why should you be the one? Why should you and Joyce sit there and, and entertain the Lord, just have your kids over? Why can't we all get in on it? Well, I say, "Our house is not big enough. Besides that, He can't talk to everybody at one time. Besides that, we just want to be with Him personally. We, we just, we just want to sit around and talk. I have a lot of questions I want to ask Him. I, we want to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ." Do you see? Look.

If Jesus is here in an earthly body, if He's at our house, He can't be at your house, isn't that right? If I'm having His full attention, then you don't have His full attention. Do

you know what, Martha and Mary said to Jesus when Lazarus was sick? “Master, if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.” Do you know we never have to say that today? Lord, if You’d been here.” You see, when I go home tonight, Jesus is at my house, but He’s at yours, too, and yours, too, and yours, too. You see, through the Holy Spirit I have all there is of Jesus and so do you. Isn’t that wonderful? Isn’t that wonderful? I mean, He’s not here at one time and there at another time. Jesus said, “...It is expedient for you that I go away; because if I don’t go, the Comforter will not come.” But, you see, now I have all there is of Jesus. He’s my own personal Lord. But you have all there is of Jesus. And Jesus loves you and dwells with you and fellowships you like there was no one else on earth, the same Jesus who loves me and dwells with me and fellowships with me, like there’s no one else on earth!

And so, who is doing this? Who, who is doing these mighty works? Jesus said, “If you believe on Me, the works that I do will you do; and greater works than these will ye do—why?—because I go to my Father.” Well, what does that have to do with it? His going to the Father was setting the stage for the Holy Spirit to come. So who is doing the works? Well, I am, but He is, because He lives in me.

Galatians chapter 2, verse 20—do you remember that? “I’m crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ who liveth in me: and the life I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” You see, in a Christian, Jesus lives again.

Do you know how the books of Acts begins? Luke, Dr. Luke, who wrote that, and, by the way, he was a medical doctor. I thank God for the medical doctors. We’ve got one sitting right there on the front row tonight, also a surgeon, also a psychiatrist all rolled into one man, also a deacon. Neat guy. Listen. I thank God for the doctors. You don’t have to check your brains at the door when you believe in Jesus. Luke, who wrote the gospel of Luke, also wrote the book of Acts. And, and Luke said, “The former treatise have I made unto thee, O Theophilus....” That’s some name. I’ve never met a kid named Theophilus. That’s theophilus name I ever heard of. It, you, “The former treatise have I made unto thee, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” Do you know what you have in the book of Luke? What Jesus began to do. And the inference is very clear. In the book of Acts you have what Jesus continues to do.

Now Jesus has already gone to heaven, but Luke, who wrote the gospel of Luke, also wrote Acts. The gospel of Luke is what Jesus did in His physical body. The book of Acts is what Jesus does in His mystical body. He’s still doing it. Now we call the book of Acts the Acts of the Apostles. That’s written on some books. It’s not the Acts of the Apostles. Some people even call it the Acts of the Holy Ghost. But it is not the Acts of the Holy Ghost, not specifically. It is the acts of Jesus Christ, what Jesus continues to do in His mystical body. “Greater works than these that I do shall ye do; and if you ask

anything in my name, I will do it.” It’s Christ in you. There’s only one person who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus. And if it’s lived at your address, He’ll still be living it in you. That’s the only way the Christian life will ever be lived. It’s not difficult; it’s impossible. There’s only one who can live it. His name is Jesus. And so we need to let Him. Just say, “Lord, I can’t; You can. And I’m going to step aside and I’m going to let You be God in me. And I’m going to do greater works than these that You did because You’re the one who’ll be doing it. I live; yet not I, but Christ who lives in me— Galatians chapter 2, verse 20.

All right now, we’ve talked about the what. We’ve talked about **the who**—who does these greater works? Well, you do, but He does because He’s in you through the Holy Spirit.

III. How Does This Come to Pass?

Now the third thing, and I’ll be finished—not only the what, not only the who, but the how. How does this come to pass? I mean, so many times we say, “I’m not doing greater works than Jesus even in quantity. I’m not, I’m not, doing it.” Well, why not? Well, look in verse 13, look at it. Go back to our text, John 14, verse 12: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father.” What’s the next word there? What’s the next word? And—A-N-D. You never begin a text with And just preach that like that’s the whole text. It conjoins something. So, the and what? It just takes the, the thought, verse 12, and it just pulls it into verse 13. And. It’s all part of the same thought. “And...” Listen to what he says here in John chapter 14, verse 13: “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Now here’s how you do the greater works. Here’s how you do it. He says, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, in my name, that will I do...” Now there’s not a greater verse on answered prayer and the power of prayer than this verse because it gives the three keys to answered prayer: number one, believing in verse 12; number two: asking in Jesus’ name, verse 13; and, number three, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Now what does it mean, what does it mean to ask in Jesus’ name? Does that mean that Jesus’ name is a little spiritual foo-foo dust that we just sprinkle on a prayer, and by some sort of a, a magic, talisman, some sort of a, a mystical recipe that we stir into our prayers to get our prayers answered? Oh, no. What does, what does it mean to ask in Jesus’ name? Well, to ask in Jesus’ name means to ask with His approval and with His authority. Let me just show you a few verses here and we’re almost finished, and pay close attention.

John 14, verse 13: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name. John 14, verse 14: “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. Look in John 15 and verse 16: “Ye have not

chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." And how does it happen? "And whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Look, if you will, in, in chapter 16, verse 23: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Look in chapter 16, verse 26: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you," and so forth.

In my name—in my name, in my name. What does that mean? Well, if I sign a check and give it to you and you carry it to the bank, the bank will give you some of my money because I put my name on that check. The name stands for the authority of the individual. When we ask in the name of Jesus, we're asking in His name, for His authority. Authority is power. Jesus said, "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy."

Now here's a 150-pound policeman. Maybe he'll weigh 150 pounds soaking wet and full of bananas. And here's an 18-wheeler semi-truck. That policeman stands out in the middle of the street, wearing his uniform with a badge. He holds up his hand and he says, "Stop!" Now what does he stop that truck with: power? No. Authority—authority.

Jesus said, "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." Who's stronger: you or Satan? Satan! Who has more authority: you or Satan? You. Jesus said, "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." That's the reason the Bible says, "Resist the devil; he will flee from you." Not because you're stronger, but because Jesus is stronger.

What is behind that policeman? Well, the whole Memphis City Police Department. What's behind the Memphis City Police Department? The state militia. What's behind that, if necessary, is the National Guard. And so, he just simply holds up his hand, and he says, "Stop, in the name of the law!" But why? Because he is acting by orders, according to law.

Now, suppose there's a wild party next door to you. You live in a condo, or you live in an apartment house. And it's getting so bad that you're afraid. You call the police. The policeman comes and he knocks on the door. Somebody says, "Who is it?" He doesn't give his name. He doesn't say, "This is John Jones." He says, "It's the law! This is the law! Open in the name of the law!" And they open, or they'd better, in the name of the law. You see, it's not him; it's the law. It's the authority. "Open in the name of the law!" But, now, he can't go next door the next morning and say, "May I borrow your lawn-mower in the name of the law." You understand? Because he cannot bring the name of the law to things that are his own personal desires, and so forth. You can't just

say, “In the name of Jesus I want a swimming pool,” you see. But you can say, “Satan, in the name of Jesus, I come against you. In the name of Jesus.” Jesus said, “If you ask anything in my name, friend, I’ll do it—I’ll do it. And greater works than these that I do will you do.”

Who’s doing it: you or Jesus? Yes! Yes! What are you doing? What is this business about? Why are we here? Friend, to get souls saved. But that’s not the bottom line. Listen. I’ve talked about the what. I’ve talked about the who. I’ve talked about the how. One last thing and I will be finished, and I’ll take about two minutes: the why—the why.

Why all of this? Why did Jesus make such a promise? Why did Jesus say, “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it?” Well, just look at verse 13, and give me the answer. Why? “That the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Now, friend, when your purpose for asking is the same as His purpose in giving, you’ll get your prayer answered for the glory of God, for the glory of God. “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified...” When your life and this church is consumed with a burning desire for the glory of God, the works that Jesus did, we’ll do, and greater works.

Conclusion

Do you know what I’m hungry to see? I’m hungry to see thousands of people come to Jesus Christ. People ask me, “Well, how big is big enough for Bellevue? How big will Bellevue be when it’s big enough?” I don’t know how big this church is going to get, but I’ll tell you one thing. I’m not going to stop it from growing. You say, “Well, what about the other churches?” I want them to grow also. I want every church to grow that’s preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. But we can’t make ourselves sick to make them well. Listen. If we reach this city for Jesus Christ, we’re going to have a bunch of churches the size of Bellevue, and Bellevue’s going to have to be a lot bigger. I mean, we’re going to have to have many, many, many so-called mega-churches if we’re serious about reaching a city for Jesus Christ. “The works that I do will you do, and greater works than these will ye do, that you believe in Me.”

Look at me. I want to start believing, don’t you? Let’s believe God. I’m tired of messing around. Let’s, let’s get out of the boat with both feet. Jesus said, “I’m going to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and He’ll live in you. And if you ask anything in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

Father, thank You for Your Word tonight. And, Father, teach me how to really believe what I preach tonight. And, Lord, make it a part of my own life. In Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

How to Do the Impossible

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 18, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 14:12, 16–18

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

JOHN 14:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Holy Spirit Has Come to Produce the Works of Jesus
- II. The Holy Spirit Has Come to Protect the Will of Jesus
- III. The Holy Spirit Has Come So You Can Perceive the Words of Jesus
- IV. The Holy Spirit Has Come to Promote the Worship of Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, take God’s Word, and find John chapter 14, and then find verse 12, and, when you’ve found it, I want you ask you a question. Don’t read the verse yet, but I’m going to ask you a question before you read the verse. How many of you are believers in Jesus Christ? Would you lift your hand? Okay now, I’m going to read the verse. All right, take your hands down. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.” Now, this time I’m not going to ask you to lift your hand, but how many of you equal and exceed the works of Jesus? Now, don’t lift your hand one way or the other, because I don’t want to embarrass you. Now, he said, Jesus said, “If you believe in me, the works that I do you’ll do, and greater works,” and you said, “I’m a believer.”

Question: Are you equaling and exceeding the works of Jesus? Well, you say, ‘Pastor, I’m really not.’ But didn’t He say, if you believed in Him, you would. Well, who’s right—you or Him? He’s right, but we happen to be wrong. There’s something wrong here.

You know, in a battle, the holder of the flag got out in front of the regiment, and a man said to the sergeant, “Sergeant, the flag is out ahead of the regiment. Shall we bring the flag back?” He said, “No, let’s bring the regiment up to the flag.” Now, what we need to do is to take this verse and not bring it to our experience, but to bring our experience up to this verse—would you agree? And, rather than trying to dumb this verse down, let’s pump ourselves up with spiritual power, and do what God wants us to

do, because most of us are unbelieving believers.

Now, what He is telling us to do on the surface seems to be impossible, and the title of the message is, “How to Do the Impossible.” The impossible becomes possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. Now, here’s what I want you to see, that indeed we can, should, and will, not only equal, but exceed the works of Jesus Christ, if we understand the ministry of the dear Holy Spirit of God.

Now, you read verse 12, but let’s go on down to verses 16 through 18, and that will help explain it. Jesus said, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter”—notice, if you have a Bible like mine, the word Comforter is capitalized. It refers to a person—“that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” Now, when Jesus said, “I will come to you,” He’s not talking about what we call the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But what He’s talking about is the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives. The Holy Spirit is going to come, and, when the Holy Spirit comes, Jesus said, “I am the One who is coming,” because Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot be separated. The best definition I know of the Holy Spirit, or a good definition, is Christ in the Christian. Now, He is to abide in the Christian. Notice what He says here, He will abide in us, and, “I will give you the Holy Spirit, another Comforter, that he may abide with you.” Now, the word abide is an interesting word. It means to settle down permanently. Ron Dunn, who’s now in heaven, one of my dearest friends, one of the greatest preachers that I ever knew, said something that I’ve never been able to forget, and I quote frequently. He said, “Our heart is not a hotel with check-out time 12:00 noon on Sunday.” When the Holy Spirit comes, He comes to live in us, and He comes to abide in us. Now, look at this scripture again. He says, “I will not leave you comfortless.” Do you see that? “I will come to you,” in verse 18. The word comfortless literally means helpless orphans. Now, He’s saying you’re not going to be like a child whose parents have deceased. You’re not going to be like a street waif. I’m not going to just turn you loose. I am coming. Jesus said, “I am coming to dwell with you permanently. I’m not going to leave you as helpless orphans.” Now, when Jesus said, “The works that I do you will do, and greater works than these shall you do,” that promise is made possible by the coming of the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, four things I want you to learn tonight about why the Holy Spirit of God has come, and why we should not only equal, but exceed, the works of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why has the Holy Spirit come?

I. The Holy Spirit Has Come to Produce the Works of Jesus

First of all: to produce the works of Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit of God that produces the

works of Jesus. Now, notice in John 14, verse 16, again, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter—another Comforter—that he may abide with you forever.” Now, the emphasis is on the word another. In the Greek language—don’t you get blessed by the Greek? In the Greek, well, you can be blessed, if you listen—in the Greek language, there are two words for another. One word means another of a different kind; the other means another of the same kind.

Let’s talk about transportation. Let’s say that you said you have a horse, and you’re going to say, “I’m going to get another kind of transportation; I’m going to get a bicycle.” And they would use the word another of a different kind. But the word Jesus uses here is another of the same kind. I like this bicycle, so I’m going to get another bicycle. That is, another of the same kind.

Now so, when Jesus said, “I will send you another Comforter,” He’s not saying another of a different kind; He is saying, “You’re going to receive someone just like Me.” And that’s the reason—skip down to verse 18—He says, “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” So, when the Holy Spirit comes, who is coming—Jesus or the Holy Spirit? Both. Yes. There’s no distinction. The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian. And so, why did Jesus say, “The works that I do shall ye do?” Because Jesus said, “I’m still going to be doing them; I’m still going to be doing them.”

Now, there’s a book written. I read it as a teen; most of us read it—What Would Jesus Do? How many of you read that book? Yeah. What Would Jesus Do? Well, what’s the import of that book? These people got to thinking one day, what would Jesus do if He were here, and we’re going to do what Jesus would do. And I love the sentiment, and there’s a sense in which we all ought to do that, but, really, philosophically, if you think about it, there are some problems there.

First of all, it implies we would know what Jesus would do. Jesus will surprise you. He was always surprising people. Don’t get the idea that you can just determine and figure out what Jesus do.

There’s another problem with that. It presupposes that, if we knew what Jesus would do, we could do it. I mean, all I have to do is figure out what Jesus would do and do it. Friend, there can’t anybody be Jesus but Jesus. And, if we determine what would Jesus do, we probably wouldn’t get it right all the time. And, number two: if we did have it right, all we would be would be little cheap tin imitations of Jesus, stumbling around trying to do what Jesus would do.

What would Jesus do, if He were here? Here’s the third problem. He is here—He is here. He’s not way off yonder beyond the blue, peering down through the clouds, saying, “Now, you work it out.” He says, “I will come to you. I will abide in you now.” So the Christian life is not lived by you; it’s lived by Jesus. There’s only one person who has ever lived the Christian life, and His name is Jesus. If it’s lived where you live, it will

be Jesus Christ living that life in you. That's the secret. He is here to do what needs to be done, and so He says, "The works that I do shall ye do—why?—because I'm coming to you. I will be in you. I'm the one that is producing those works in you."

Now, we need to understand that it is better that Jesus went back to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. Now, most of us think, wouldn't it be wonderful, if we could just have lived back yonder when Jesus was here in the flesh walking the shores of Galilee? Wouldn't that be wonderful? Friend, we have the advantage over Peter, Paul, and James, Matthew and Bartholomew. We have the advantage. Now, I know we don't intellectually believe that, but it is true. Let me prove it to you.

John 16, verse 7: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth...—now, Jesus is speaking— Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away..."—do you know what the word expedient means? It's better, necessary—"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Now, Jesus said, "If I stay here, you can't have the blessing of the Father, which is the Holy Spirit." Not only Jesus with you, but Jesus in you, abiding in you forever—and that is better.

Those of you who came to the Passion Play this year saw Mary and Martha standing about this place on the stage. And Lazarus has died, and Martha comes, and she scolds Him. She says, "Master, if You'd been here, my brother would not have died." And Mary comes and says, "Jesus, Lazarus is dead. If you had been here, he wouldn't have died." Why was He not there? Because He was somewhere else. He could have been there, but He wasn't. You see, in Bible times, if Jesus is over here with Mark, He's not over here with Ken, because, in His flesh, He's one place at one time. But, because He has gone to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, Jesus is with me everywhere I go, and He's with you everywhere you go, and none of us ever have to say, "Oh, Lord, if You'd only been here, if You'd only been here." You see, "it's expedient for you; it's better for you that I go away," because never will any Christian ever have to say, "O, Lord, if You had only been here." He is here! He's alive and well, and living in you. In a Christian, Christ is living on this earth. Jesus Christ is the invisible part of the visible Christian and He is in us, and we are the visible part of the invisible Christ. He is in us.

Now, there's a man named Stuart Briscoe, who is also a friend, a dear man of God, a great preacher. Stuart Briscoe said, "When I first got saved, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, and I was going out to live the Christian life just whistling, so happy." He said to himself, "This is so easy." But then, after a while, he stumbled and fell a little bit, and said, "This is more difficult than I realized. This Christian life is hard." Then, after a while, he began to say, "This Christian life is impossible. No longer easy, no longer hard—impossible." And then, he discovered the fullness of the Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit. No longer did he say, it's easy, or hard, or impossible. He said, "It is

wonderful”—it is wonderful. Christ in you. Why did the Holy Spirit of God come? To produce the works of Jesus. It is Christ in us now living the Christian life. If you don't learn that, you're going to have such a difficult time in your Christian life. I'm not laughing because I think it's funny; I'm laughing because you're going to discover the truth, and be so happy.

II. The Holy Spirit Has Come to Protect the Will of Jesus

All right now, number two: not only did the Holy Spirit of Christ come to produce the works of Jesus; He has come to protect the will of Jesus. To produce the works; to protect the will. Now, you are not your own. You belong to Christ. Notice here in chapter 14, verse 26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Now, let's zero in now on the word Comforter. It's the Greek word *parakletos*. And what it is, is a fancy word for lawyer. It's a fancy word for a lawyer, the paraclete, the *parakletos*. In 1 John chapter 2, verse 1, it's translated advocate. “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.” It's the same word, *parakletos*. It's a word for lawyer. Now, Williams translated this, “whom the Father will send to represent me.” Now, what does your lawyer do for you? Well, your lawyer protects your rights. He defends you. He stands up for you and tries to protect your rights, your will. Now, what the Holy Spirit does, not only does He produce the works of Christ because He is Christ in us, but He, the Holy Spirit, protects the will of Christ. He represents the Lord Jesus Christ in me.

In the Old Testament there were families that lived together like clans, and they would have a lawyer, a paraclete, an advocate; and in tribal disputes he would plead the family cause, he would guard the family name, he would protect the family interests, and he was called a paraclete. Now, that's what the Holy Spirit of God is come to do in you, is to plead the cause of Jesus, to guard the name of Jesus, to protect the interest of Jesus in your heart. Jesus is my advocate, but the Holy Spirit is Jesus' advocate. Did you know we're related to two lawyers. The Holy Spirit of God is the advocate that lives in me to protect the rights, the privileges, the will of the Lord Jesus Christ in me, protecting Jesus' rights. Jesus is my advocate protecting my rights before the throne. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Satan is like a prosecuting attorney, and he said, “Do you see what Adrian did? Do you see how he failed? You ought to condemn him.” And Jesus steps forward and says, “Father, he did fail, but he is Mine. I died for those sins. I atoned for those sins. I paid for those sins, and I plead his cause,” and Jesus, as my advocate, makes intercession for me. But the Holy Spirit makes intercession for Jesus. The Holy Spirit is representing Jesus' rights in my life.

Now, how does He do that? It is called conviction. Have you ever done something that you ought not to do and the Holy Spirit blows the whistle in your life? Have you ever felt someone speaking to you and saying, “You’re wrong. You ought not to act that way. You are not to live that way. Confess that. Forsake that.” Why? Who is that? What is that power that is convicting me and you? And He does for me. I don’t know whether He does for you, but He does for me. He blows the whistle on me, and says, “Adrian, you are out of bounds.” What is He doing? He is protecting the will of Jesus. He is an advocate representing Jesus in the Christian.

Now, here’s how to do the impossible. Receive the Holy Spirit of God when you receive Jesus. And He is there to produce the works of Christ. He is there to protect the will of Christ.

III. The Holy Spirit Has Come So You Can Perceive the Words of Jesus

Thirdly, He is there so you can perceive the words of Christ. You need to understand Jesus. So the Holy Spirit is there to help you perceive His Word. Look, if you will, in John 14, verse 26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” And then, in John 16, verses 12 through 13, Jesus said, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.”

Now, thank God I can perceive the words of Christ, because the Holy Spirit of God is my teacher living in me to help me to understand things I cannot understand. I could not study to preach unless I could pray. Often I sit at my desk, and I pray, “Lord God, teach me,” even as Jim taught us to sing this morning, Open the eyes of my heart, Lord; help me to understand, because we do have the dear Holy Spirit of God teaching us. Let me give you a corresponding scripture. You might want to turn to 1 Corinthians 2, verses 9 through 14. Listen to this: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Now, what he is saying is there are spiritual truths that you don’t get through the eye gate through reading and observation. There are certain things that you don’t through the ear gate through the auditory means. Then he says there are certain things you don’t conjure up emotionally. “Eye hath not seen, ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man—the emotions—the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”—but now notice what he says—“but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth

the things of a man, save—or, except—the spirit of man which is in him.”

You don't know Adrian like I know Adrian. I don't know you like you know you. But notice: “What man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” Only God knows God. “Now, we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” Suppose I could take my spirit and put it in you. Then you'd understand me. What God has done is taken the Holy Spirit and put Him in you. And that's how you can understand God. Notice what he says—verse 12: “For we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man—the word natural man means a man apart from Christ—but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned”—or spiritually understood. You might as well expect your dog to understand opera as to expect a natural man to know the things of God, apart from the Spirit of God.

Why the Holy Spirit? To produce the works of Christ; to protect the will of Christ; to perceive the words of Christ. So we can know the only way that we can know and truly understand is to have the Holy Spirit of God in us. It's so important. John 16, verse 14: “He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” That's the reason that Jesus becomes very intimate and very precious to us, and we have insights. We know things that the world cannot know, because we have the dear Holy Spirit of God.

IV. The Holy Spirit Has Come to Promote the Worship of Jesus

Now, here's the last reason that I want to mention tonight. Obviously, there are many more. But not only can we do the impossible because, through the Holy Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit produces the works, protects the will, enables us to perceive the words of Christ; but the Holy Spirit of God is given to promote the worship of Jesus—to promote the worship of Jesus. John 16, verse 14—look at it: “He shall glorify me; he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you.”

Now, what does the Holy Spirit of God do in me? The Holy Spirit of God in me glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the mark of a Spirit-filled man? That he speaks in tongues? That he does miracles? That he can unpick divine mysteries? I'll tell you the mark of a Spirit-filled man, is that he glorifies Jesus Christ. That's the mark of a Spirit-filled man. The ministry of the Holy Spirit of God is to glorify Jesus Christ. Now, I love the dear Holy Spirit of God, but I want to give you a warning. Beware of any movement

that has the Holy Spirit for a figurehead. Now, I'm not denigrating the ministry of the Holy Spirit, because I've already said He is Christ in the Christian, but some ministries seem somehow to have shifted a little bit, and it's like now that you have Jesus, now you need to go on to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes people ask me, "Pastor, have you received the second blessing?" And I say, "Oh, yes, I have." "Oh, well, tell me about it." The second blessing is discovering what I got in the first one when I got Jesus. And I'll tell you what. I've received the third blessing, and that's discovering I didn't discover it all in the second blessing. Friend, you can go deeper into Jesus, but you'll never go beyond Jesus, never beyond Jesus. And, if you see a parade, and it's being led by the Holy Spirit, there's something wrong. If you see the Holy Spirit standing on the sidelines and pointing to Jesus leading the parade, there's something right. Now, I'm not putting down the Holy Spirit of God—thank God, I'm talking tonight about being filled with the Holy Spirit of God—not at all. But I am saying that Jesus is glorified by the Spirit of God. A Spirit-filled man, a Spirit-filled church, will make much of Jesus Christ. That's what it's all about. You'll never go beyond the Lord Jesus Christ. And He, the Spirit, has come to promote the worship of Jesus. And, by the way, this is the key to being filled and staying filled. Some of you are preacher boys here tonight, and you pray, "Dear God, fill me with the Holy Spirit." Why do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, I want to be a great preacher. God says, "I'm not interested." Well, God, fill me with the Holy Spirit; I want to understand the Bible. The Holy Spirit says, "Ho-hum." Well, fill me with the Holy Spirit; I want to be a soul winner. "I couldn't care less," God says. Well, fill me with the Holy Spirit; I want to live a holy life. Again, "ho-hum." Something's wrong. Let try it one more time. "Lord, I want Jesus Christ to be glorified in my life." "Is that what you want? That's what I want too. Let's get together." God will fill you with the Holy Spirit. And, by the way, He may make you a great preacher, and help you understand the Bible, and help you to be a soul winner, and live a holy life. But, you see, all of those are subsets of the main thing, and that is the glory of Jesus Christ. That's why the Holy Spirit has come. "He will not speak of himself." That means He's not the origin of His own teaching. "He takes the things of mine," Jesus says, "and He will show them unto you." He will teach you these things.

Conclusion

Now, friend, that's how our Lord intended for us to equal and exceed what He has done. Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, how can we exceed His works? He raised the dead." Well, let me tell you something, friend. All of the miracles that Jesus Christ did, the miracles of glory, only typified and portrayed the miracles of grace.

If a person in a wheelchair were to come here tonight, a paraplegic, and I were to walk down here and lay my hands on that individual, and before your eyes shriveled

limbs would pulsate with life, and that individual would leap from that wheelchair and begin to glorify God in such a way that it was a bona fide miracle that no one could deny it, next Sunday, or the next time we had a meeting, you would not be able to put people in this building with a shoehorn. It would be crowded if people were being healed physically. Now, if physical healing is that important—and it is to many people—I want to ask you a question: Did Jesus Christ have the ability to heal everybody? Did He? No. Many times, He would say after He healed people, “Don’t tell anybody about this.” There at the pool of Bethesda many were sick. He chose one man, and healed one man. He didn’t heal everybody. But we have a world today full of miracle mongers who want everybody being healed, because they think that’s so great. But now, let’s suppose rather than somebody here in a wheelchair, let’s suppose a 12-year-old child comes forward and says, “I want to give my heart to Christ.” If you were here last Wednesday night, I took a roving microphone and went back there. And way back over yonder was a child. She looked to me about 12 years of age, and she talked about how she had been saved. Some of you remember that. Were you here Wednesday night? Yes. You remember that? She said, “After 9/11, I realized I needed Jesus.” I cannot tell you how that blessed my heart to hear that child speak of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to tell you something, friend. The greater miracle was that little girl; greater than somebody in a wheelchair throwing their crutches away. Now, you may not believe that, but let me tell you why. For Jesus to heal the sick, all He had to do is just simply say to be healed. But to save that little girl, He died in agony and blood. His blood was shed to save a soul.

A college student asked his pastor, “Do you think there’s life on other planets?” The pastor said, “No, son, I really don’t.” He said, “Well, now, Pastor, you think about it. Of the billions and billions and billions of stars and universes and galaxies, all of that out there, don’t you think that somehow there’s life on other planets?” He said, “No, I can’t prove there is or there isn’t, but I really don’t believe there is.” He said, “Then tell me why did God go to all that trouble to make all that?” The pastor said, “What trouble?” Poof—universes drip from his fingertips.

You listen to this pastor. The only time God Almighty had any trouble was when Jesus died on that cross in agony and blood. He died to save a soul. That, my friend, is why that miracle is greater than this miracle. That is the great miracle. You talk about exceeding the works of Jesus—when you and I and all of us take the gospel around the world, not to a little land of Palestine, but around the world by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, who lives in us to produce the works of Christ, to protect the will of Christ, that we might perceive the words of Christ, that we might practice the worship of Christ by believing in Him. And I believe it’s time we brought the regiment up to the flag rather than bringing the flag back to the regiment. Why don’t you ask the Holy Spirit of God to

do a fresh work in you, as I want Him to do in me?

Let's bow our heads together in prayer.

Would you pray and thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. And would you ask that He would renew and refresh you, and that you might equal and exceed the works of Jesus, not in quality, but in quantity. Now, there are so many of us. And now we're free to go around the world with Jesus in each one of us.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for Your Word. Seal it to our hearts. In Your strong name we pray. Holy Spirit of God, Jesus in me, I want to yield to You. And, Lord Jesus, I know I could never go beyond You, and have no desire to, but help me, Lord Jesus, to go deeper into You tonight, and, Lord, to yield more of what I am to You. And what I pray, I believe many are praying. In Your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. Precious friend, you cannot have the gift of the Holy Spirit without the giver, whose name is Jesus. And, in order to understand and to participate in what I've preached about tonight, you need to take the first step, which is to repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. When I say, repent of your sin, I don't mean, clean up your life and then get saved. You can't clean up your life without getting saved, but I mean to say, I'm sick and tired of the old way. I want a new way. I want Jesus. I want Him to take control of my life, and I want Him to start with me wherever I am and make me what He wants me to be. Are you willing tonight to give all you know of you to all you know of Jesus? Are you willing tonight to say, "Lord Jesus, I believe You hung in agony and blood on the cross for me; I believe, Lord, it would be a miracle, greater than the raising of the dead, if You were to save me tonight, and I know You will if I'll trust you"? If you'll trust Him tonight, I want you to pray with me. Pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, I need You, and I want You. Now, by an act of faith, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen. †

These Are the Good Old Days

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 21, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 14:12–18

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

JOHN 14:16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Holy Spirit Is the Residing Spirit
- II. The Holy Spirit Is the Revealing Spirit
- III. The Holy Spirit Is the Reminding Spirit
- IV. The Holy Spirit Is the Reproving Spirit

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, amen. Would you be finding, please, John chapter 14? In just a moment, we're going to look at verse 12. But, I don't think there's been a one of us that has not, at one time or another, wished that we could have lived back in Bible times. We wish—oh, we wish—and we think and we dream: “Would it not have been wonderful to have been back there in the days of miracles, in the days when Jesus was walking the shores of blue Galilee? Would it not have been wonderful to see His miracles? And oh, how grand and glorious it would have been to have lived back yonder in the good old days!” Well, folks, I'm here tonight to tell you this: these are the good old days. And, that's the title of the message tonight: “These Are the Good Old Days.” I had rather be living now than be living then.

Let me give you the text for tonight: John 14 and verse 12: Jesus said, “*Verily, verily*”—now, when He says, “*verily*,” that's important. When He says, “*verily, verily*,” that's *verily, verily* important. That means “pay attention; pay attention.” It means “amen, amen.” It means “emphasis, emphasis”—“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believed on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go [to the] Father*”—or, “unto my Father.” So, what our Lord is saying is, “It is better that Jesus go away than that Jesus remain.” That means that it is better for us to be here while Christ is in heaven than it would have been for us to have been here when the Lord Jesus walked on this earth. Now, why did He say that? Well, He says if

He goes away, He is going to send the Holy Spirit. Let's continue to read. He says in verse 13—*“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye...ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you”*—He's speaking of Himself right now—*“and shall be in you”*—He's speaking of the Holy Spirit now—*“I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you”* (John 14:12–18)—He's speaking both of Himself and the Spirit.

Now, let me tell you why it is better that Jesus is in heaven and the Holy Spirit is in us. Let me give you four ministries of the Holy Spirit tonight—if you're a child of God, four wonderful ministries. And, we're actually going to be looking in the very heart of the Gospel of John, in John chapters 14, 15, and 16. We're going to see the ministry of the Holy Spirit to every believer; and then, we're going to understand that it is better for us now than it would have been to have been with Jesus when He walked the shores of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem. Now, here are four things that the Holy Spirit does.

I. The Holy Spirit Is the Residing Spirit

First of all, He resides in us, that He might restore the presence of Jesus in us. Now, Jesus was with them; but now, Jesus is in us. Look again in verses 16 and 17: *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not...but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you”*—now, watch this—*“and shall be in you.”* (John 14:16–17) If you're a child of God, if you're born again, the Holy Spirit of God is in you. In the Old Testament times, and in the time when Jesus was walking this earth, the Holy Spirit was a presence with men. Now, He is going to be in men. And, Jesus said He's going to abide in you, and the word *abide* means that He's going to dwell permanently in you. He said, *“I will not leave you comfortless.”* (John 14:18) Well, comfortless can be specifically translated “I will not leave you helpless orphans.” That is, “I'm not going to leave you to fend for yourself.”

Now, He says, “I will be in you, and He will be in you.” Now, Jesus is not confused. He is not saying, “I will go away.” And yet, He says in verse 18: *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”* (John 14:18) Make up your mind, Lord: Are you going or are you staying? The answer is yes. Now, learn this about the Holy Spirit; let me give you this definition of the Holy Spirit: *the Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian*. Do you understand that? *The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian*. And so, Jesus goes away in bodily form, but Jesus comes again in spirit-form to live in us.

Now look, if you will, in verse 16: *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you*

another Comforter”—“*another Comforter.*” (John 14:16) Now, the word *Comforter* we’re going to look at in a moment, but let’s just look at the word *another*. The word *another* is a Greek word that means “another of the exact same kind.” There are two Greek words that are translated “another.” One Greek word means “another of a different kind.” So, let’s say that you had a horse and you’re going to get another form of transportation—you get a car. That’s another of a different kind. But, let’s say you have one car and you’re going to get another one just like it. That’s another of the same kind, you see. Now, the word He uses here is the Greek word that doesn’t mean “another of a different kind”; it means “another of the exact same kind.” That is, “I’m going, but I’m not leaving. You’re going to receive another just like me.”

But, why is it better—why is it expedient—that He go away? Why is it better that the Lord Jesus go away? He says, “*It is expedient for you that I go away.*” (John 16:7) And, I’m going to show you that in just a moment over in John 16. He says, “*[It’s better] for you that I go away.*” (John 16:7) Well, when Jesus was here—when Jesus was here on this earth—He could only be with one person at a time. Mary and Martha, when Lazarus was sick, they almost scolded Jesus. They said, “Lord, if you had been here, Lazarus never would have died.” (John 11:32) We never have to say, “Lord, if you had been here, this or that.” He’s always with us, you see. That’s why it’s better for us. That’s why these are the good old days. In the days when Jesus was here in the flesh, if He went home tonight with Brother Bob, He couldn’t go home tonight with me. But, He’s going home tonight with Brother Bob, and He’s going home with you, Newby, and He’s going home with me all at the same time. He is my own personal companion, and He is your own personal companion. He is not now limited by time. He’s not now limited by space. I have all of Jesus there is in me, and you have all of Jesus there is in you. And, I don’t have any advantage over you, and you don’t have any advantage over us.

So, what is the ministry of the Holy Spirit? He is the residing Spirit, that He might restore the presence of Jesus not with us but in us.

II. The Holy Spirit Is the Revealing Spirit

Now, here’s the second ministry of the Holy Spirit: not only is He the residing Spirit, but He is the revealing Spirit. He is here to reveal the person of Jesus to us. Now, not only does He bring Jesus in us, but He also reveals Jesus to us. Look, if you will now, in verse 26—John 14 and verse 26. Look at it: “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” (John 14:26) Now, look, if you will, in chapter 15 and verse 26; he says this: “*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*” (John 15:26) Then, look, if you will,

in chapter 16 and verse 13: *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself”—that is, He’s not going to be the originator of what He says—“but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* (John 16:13–14)

Now, in these passages, the Holy Spirit is called the “Comforter,” and that’s the Greek word *Paracletos*, which is really translated in another place “Advocate. So, what is a paraclete? Well, a paraclete is a combination of two Greek words: *para*, meaning “alongside,” and *kletos*, “to call.” He’s someone called alongside of us. If you were to go into court, you’d want a lawyer alongside of you. You’d call him; you’d say, “You come and stand here and help me.” He is your paraclete. This word is translated in 1 John 2, verse 1—it’s translated “advocate”: *“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 John 2:1)

Now, in Old Testament times, a paraclete, an advocate, a Comforter—all of them the same, just different ways of expressing the same person—was someone who would stand up for the tribe. They were divided into tribes. They had big families. And, they were very jealous about the family name; very careful about the family name; and very careful that the family not get into any lawsuits, any difficulties; and very solicitous for all of the members of the family. So, the tribe had an advocate, a paraclete, a comforter, that he was there to watch for the interests of the family and to plead the family cause and to protect the family name. And, that is what the Holy Spirit does for Jesus: He is the advocate of Jesus.

Now, don’t get the idea that the Holy Spirit is your advocate. He is Jesus’ advocate. Now, you have an advocate. Who is your advocate? Jesus. You see, every one of us is related to two advocates. And remember, that’s just a fancy name for “lawyer.” Every one of us is related to two advocates. We have an advocate. That’s Jesus. He’s my lawyer. You might put it down—in 1 John chapter 2, verse 1: *“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 John 2:1)

Now, everything in heaven is done legally. Why doesn’t God just kill the devil? No, God’s going to deal with the devil legally. He does everything legally. And, Satan is a condemned criminal, but God is working out a judicial process. But, right now, the devil in the whole scheme of things is tantamount to and corresponds to a prosecuting attorney. He is called in the Bible *“the accuser of [the] brethren.”* (Revelation 12:10) He’s watching you. He’s watching you. He’s watching you to accuse you before the Father, just as he accused Job before the Father. He accused Job of being selfish and self-serving and only serving God because God had bribed him and bought him off. And, he is called *“the accuser of [the] brethren”* (Revelation 12:10) in the book of the Revelation.

Well, suppose I sin. Satan is quick to point that out, and he says, “Well, there’s your servant Adrian Rogers, God. You say he loves you and all of this and he’s righteous and all of that. How could he be righteous and have lost his temper like that? Why, he deserves judgment. And, if you don’t judge him, you’re not righteous because you’re supposed to be holy and you’re supposed to judge sin.” And so, he accuses me, and he’s the prosecuting attorney. He’s the D.A. And, he has pointed out my sins, and he demands that I be judged—not that he is all that concerned in righteousness, but he just simply wants to see me suffer and he wants to embarrass God.

But, about that time, my advocate steps up—and my advocate is Jesus Christ—and He says, “Father, let me handle this case. I admit that he sinned. I admit that he failed, but he’s in the process. He’s a growing Christian, and I will chastise him, Father. But, so far as those sins are concerned, Father, for those sins I died.” And, He holds up those nail-pierced hands. And, He is my advocate, and He says, “Father, I’ve already paid for those sins, and he can’t come into double jeopardy. Those sins have been paid for. He is my child.” And, He pleads my cause, and He pleads His blood. And, He is my advocate. *“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 John 2:1) So, I am related to Jesus, and He is my advocate. He pleads my cause.

But, who pleads Jesus’ cause? The Holy Spirit. Now, as He pleads my cause before the Father, the Holy Spirit pleads His cause in my heart. He is the Advocate. He is the One who is protecting the name of Jesus in me. He is the One who is taking the things of Jesus and making them real to me. He is the revealing Spirit, and He is the way that I can know Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit of God who is the advocate of the Lord Jesus in my heart testifying to me just who the Lord Jesus is.

Now, just keep your bookmark there in John, and turn to a very interesting passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Just fast-forward a few books and you’ll come to 1 Corinthians, and look with me in chapter 2. And, I’d like for you to turn to this because here’s a verse that we often use. It’s a wonderful verse. We often use it in funerals to tell how wonderful heaven is going to be—and indeed, heaven is going to be wonderful, but this is not really what this verse is talking about. Listen to it in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 9: *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”*—and so, that’s often read at funerals, isn’t it? “Eye hasn’t seen, ear hasn’t heard, the heart has not comprehended what heaven is going to be like.” But, when we die, we’re going to heaven, and then we’ll see all of these things, we’ll hear all of these things, and we’ll know all of these things. But, that is not the meaning of that verse. Look in the next verse—*“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:9–10)—not God will; He already has. What the eye cannot see, what the ear cannot comprehend,

what the heart cannot know we can know by the Holy Spirit. You don't have to wait 'til you die to know the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. But, how are you going to know these things? The Holy Spirit of God, who is the residing Spirit, is the revealing Spirit. He is the One who makes these things known. And, it doesn't deal with the sweet by and by but with the nasty now and now. You can know these things right now.

Now, go back to John chapter 16. Look again in verses 13 and 14: *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* (John 16:13–14) Now, the Holy Spirit of God is here to take the things of Jesus and to make them real to you. That's the only way you can know Jesus. Apart from the Holy Spirit, you can only know about Jesus. By the Holy Spirit, you have Christ in you. And, the Holy Spirit is revealing Christ to you, and, therefore, when you pray, you don't pray at Him—you don't launch a prayer. You pray with Him, to Him.

He is real to you. And, I don't want to sound... Well, I don't want to sound like I think I'm special, but Jesus is real to me—He's real to me. I thank God He is. I know Jesus. I know Him just like I know any of you, only I know Him better. How is that? Those of you who know, you know what I'm talking about because what I'm saying is true to you, also. How do you know the Lord Jesus? How is He real to you? Because the Spirit of God, who is the revealing Spirit, has taken the things of Christ and He's shown them to you. And, He, in you, is the advocate of Jesus pleading the cause of Jesus, protecting the name of Jesus.

Now, we have a lot of movements today in the religious world, and some of them are centering around the Holy Spirit. Beware of any movement that has the Holy Spirit as a figurehead. I'm not denigrating the Holy Spirit. He is God of very God. But, let me tell you what the office work of the Holy Spirit is: the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself; He is not the originator of His thoughts, nor does He glorify Himself. He takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us. And, if you see a parade going down the street and you think that the Holy Spirit is leading the parade, it's the wrong parade. But, if you see a parade going down the street and the Holy Spirit standing on the sidelines and pointing out Jesus leading the parade, that's the right parade. I mean, He is pointing out the Lord Jesus. He is glorifying the Lord Jesus in your heart and in your life.

III. The Holy Spirit Is the Reminding Spirit

So, the Holy Spirit, number one, He is the residing Spirit, and He makes the presence of Jesus real in us, that He restores the presence of Jesus. And, He is the revealing Spirit: He reveals the person of Jesus to us. Now, here's the third thing He does: He is the

reminding Spirit. Go back to chapter 14, and look, if you will, in verse 26: *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things”*—that’s one thing. How many of you have ever forgotten anything that you’ve learned? You know, I have a good memory; I have a great “forgetery.” Now listen—*“he shall teach you all things”*—and now, watch this, and here’s the good part—*“and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26) Now, this is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the subconscious. He is the residing Spirit. He is the revealing Spirit. He is the reminding Spirit. He brings these things to your remembrance.

Now, He quickens your mind not only to learn the truth but to recall the truth. And, there are times when the Holy Spirit of God will step into your heart, into your mind, into your subconscious and give you a word. Here’s a verse; I love this verse: Isaiah chapter 50 and verse 4: *“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned”*—and by the way, I often pray this; I often quote this because, as a preacher and a speaker, this is one of the great verses in my own heart in my life—*“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he [awakeneth] morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear [like] the learned.”* (Isaiah 50:4) The Holy Spirit wakens us, opens our understanding, speaks to us, gives us recall, so that we can speak a word in due season. And, we’ve all had this happen. Sometimes when we need a special word from God, we feel so inadequate. The Holy Spirit says, “Say this.” Sometimes when we’re witnessing to a person and they bring up an objection, the Holy Spirit will say, “Here’s a scripture to use,” and just minister to your subconscious. When emergencies come, the Holy Spirit makes us incredibly adequate.

Let me turn—turn with me now—to Luke. You’re in John; just turn backward to Luke, if you will—just the book to the left—and look in Luke chapter 12. And, here’s the kind of ministry that I’m talking about now, where I’m talking about Him being the reminding Spirit. Luke chapter 12 and verse 11—look at it: *“And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say”*—now, listen to this next verse—*“For the Holy Ghost [will] teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”* (Luke 12:11–12) That’s so great. The Lord says, “Now, you’re going to get in trouble if you follow me.” And, I’ve reminded you many, many times that *Jesus didn’t come to get you out of trouble; He came to get into trouble with you.* And, you will get in trouble if you follow the Lord Jesus. *“All [who] live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* (2 Timothy 3:12) And, in the last days, it’s going to get worse.

I want to ask you a question: What would you do if they put you up against the wall and they said, “There’s a cross. There’s a Bible on the ground. Spit on it; curse Christ,

or we'll kill you"? What would you do? You'd say, "Kill me." I believe that's what you'd say: "If that's necessary, just kill me"—*"For...me to live is Christ...to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21) What if they said to you, "All right. Now, we're going to put your wife up there, and we're going to begin to abuse her and then mutilate her until you deny Christ"? Then, what would you do? Suppose they were to take your children or grandchildren and begin to dismember them before your eyes, say, "Just deny Christ or else." Or, suppose they put you in one... What would you do? You say, "Pastor, I wish you wouldn't bring up questions like that." Well, I really shouldn't because our Lord said, "Don't think about those kind of things. Don't think about them. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. That's my responsibility. The Holy Ghost will tell you what to do when that time comes. He will minister to you. He will give you wisdom. He will give you the tongue of the learned. He will give you the mind of Christ. He will show you what to say during those times." And, that's a wonderful promise—isn't it?—from the Word of God.

IV. The Holy Spirit Is the Reproving Spirit

He is the residing Spirit. He is the revealing Spirit. He is the reminding Spirit. One other thing: He's the reprovng Spirit. Turn to John chapter 16, and look in verse 7, if you will. Our Lord there is giving us another wonderful promise in John chapter 16 and verse 7: *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away"—that is, "It's better for you that I go away"—"for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come"—the Holy Spirit—"he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."* (John 16:7–11)

Now, our Lord has given them the Great Commission. He's told them to go out and to witness in all of the world. They're to turn the world upside down. He has given them a mission impossible. They're going out against the imperial might of Rome, and they're going out against the wisdom of intellectual Greece. And, they're going out against the stiff-necked bigotry of His own, of the Jewish people of that day—a religious bigotry. They're going out against all of this. Now, here's the General. He gives them marching orders. He says, "We're going into battle." And then, the General departs, and He says, "It's better for you that I go away because I am the General, but I am sending you an ally who will be with you. And, you've got to bring this world to an understanding, a knowledge, of me—the people of this world. And, these men need to learn three things: number one, they need to learn the nature of sin; they need to learn the nature of righteousness; and they need to learn the nature of judgment. They need to learn something about sin, which is the curse. They need to learn something about

righteousness, which is the cure. And, they need to learn something about condemnation if they persist in their sin and do not take the cure.” And so, the Holy Spirit of God brings this conviction through us.

I am so dependent upon the Holy Spirit when I preach. I would be petrified—as a matter of fact, I would quit the ministry immediately—if I thought it depended upon my logic, my oratory, my ability, my persuasion, my personality, or whatever to put you under conviction of sin. That’s totally, absolutely impossible. But, the Holy Spirit of God in me, taking the Word of God—even when I stumble and fail, and maybe I’m not as keen or quick or concise as I ought to be—yet the Holy Spirit of God takes poor, faltering, stumbling, failing words, and He adds His power. And, He is the One who convicts. He is the One who reproves. Thank God for that. I stand on this when I preach the Word of God and when I witness: *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”* (John 16:3) Look again in verse 8: *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* (John 16:8)

And so, all we are is the voice of the Spirit. It’s the Holy Spirit of God who is speaking in us. He is the residing Spirit. He is the revealing Spirit. He is the reminding Spirit, and He is the reproofing Spirit. He is the One who reproves the world. He’s the One who brings this conviction. That’s the reason that if you would be a soul winner, it is so vitally important that you be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

Sometimes if you want to do some good reading, read the biography of Charles Grandison Finney. You may not agree with all of the theology of Finney, but Finney was a man greatly anointed of God. Read his revival lectures some time. Read some of the things that happened with this man. And, as I read, I think, “I need to be more like Finney was because he was more like Jesus, I believe, than Adrian is.” But, Finney had the anointing, the power of God on him.

He used to hold meetings and sometimes go into places of business. One time, he went into a factory. It was a garment factory, and they had all of these sewing machines—just rows and rows and rows of sewing machines. And, many, many people worked in this factory. And, when Finney walked into the factory, there was a woman who was sewing. She was at her machine, and she made a smart remark—sort of a cynical, caustic, halfway funny, humorous remark—about the man of God and about revivals and so forth. And, some around her just began to titter or laugh a little bit. But, Finney walked in. He never uttered a word. He knew what was going on, and he just looked at that woman. There was something about the presence of God, the power of the Spirit, just in the very life of that man that just the very presence of that man brought that woman under great conviction immediately. She got so nervous that the thread

broke in her machine.; and then, she couldn't get it threaded again. And, she finally just broke down and began to weep, and conviction began to spread and go through that factory. And, Finney had not preached—just the Spirit of God in him, just his very presence, the God in him, somehow had seemed to have a convicting spirit of sin and judgment and righteousness.

The owner of the factory, who was not a Christian, realized that something unusual was happening. The owner of the factory said, “We’re going to close the factory. God is at work. It is more important that people attend to their souls than that we make these garments and these clothes.” The factory closed, and almost every one in that factory gave his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s the power of God.

We need to see more of that today. We need, when people come into our buildings, they need to know, when they come to Bellevue, into our Sunday school classes, into our homes, that God is here. We just sometimes club people with the Bible and browbeat them or try to think that by our ingenuity or our cleverness that we can talk them into being saved. But, I long to see the Holy Spirit of God convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He is the reproving Spirit.

Conclusion

So, I want to say, folks, that it is better for us right now to have the Holy Spirit in us than to have Jesus in literal bodily form walking side by side with us. I hope you believe that. *“It is expedient for you that I go away”* (John 16:7)—*“The works that I do [you’ll] do...and greater works than these [that I do will ye] do; because I go [to] my Father.”* (John 14:12) Thank God for the Holy Spirit, and yield your heart and life to the Holy Spirit of God. The proof that you are filled with the Spirit is not that you speak with tongues; the proof that you’re filled with the Spirit is that you live like Jesus because He, the Holy Spirit, is Christ in the Christian.

Father, I pray that you will help us to be aware of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives and not to forget His presence in us. Lord, you had to remind those in Corinth and say, *“What? know ye not that your [bodies are] the temple of the Holy Ghost...?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19) Help us, Lord, not to be mindless of His presence but, O Lord, to give Him honor as He honors Jesus in us. In His dear name, the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Now, look at me. We’re going to conclude the service tonight with a gospel invitation, and Brother Jamie is going to lead us in just a moment singing an invitation. You cannot have the Holy Spirit in you until you’re saved. As a matter of fact, being saved means receiving Christ. And, when you receive Christ, you really are receiving the Holy Spirit because you can’t receive Christ in physical form. He has ascended and gone to heaven so to receive Christ is to receive the Spirit of God. And, the Bible says, *“If any*

man have not the Spirit of Christ, [he's] none of his." (Romans 8:9) You don't get saved and then receive the Holy Spirit. Being saved is receiving the Holy Spirit, and receiving the Holy Spirit is being saved. And, you do that by faith. If you would pray, "Lord Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me. You want to save me. You will save me if I trust you, and I do trust you now. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me."

"Pastor, does that mean that I'll have a feeling or will I get a chill? Will I laugh? Will I cry? Will I get warm?" No, the Bible doesn't say anything about any of that. It may show up in your emotions, but it's not a matter of your emotions; it's a matter of faith. You just receive Christ by faith. Trust Him. Forget about your feelings. Just trust Christ. The fact is that He died for you. You put your faith in that fact, and the feelings will come along. But, if you try to put your faith in feelings, the whole thing just comes apart. Put your faith in God's facts. Trust the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit of God will begin to reveal Jesus in you. And, as you grow, you'll learn more and more about Jesus and more and more about His Word.

In just a moment, I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to stand down here at the front. And tonight, if you want to give your heart to Jesus, leave your seat and come forward and just tell one of these ministers, "I want to be saved," and we'll take a Bible and lead you to Jesus. Or, perhaps you have been saved and you want to come tonight and say, "I've been saved. I've come to make it public. I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want to be baptized and added to the fellowship of this church." Or, maybe you have a membership elsewhere and you'd like to transfer your membership to Bellevue. Now, we're not looking for mere joiners. We're not trying to pull you away from another church. But, if it's God's will for you to be here—this is where the Spirit of God speaks to you; this is where you feel the presence of Christ real in your heart—we invite you to come and say, "I want to be a member of Bellevue." And, the minister will tell you how you may become a member.

So, some are coming, saying, "I want to be saved." Others are coming, perhaps, saying, "I have been saved, and I want to be baptized and added to the church." Others are coming, saying, "I'm saved and baptized, a member somewhere else, but I want to place my membership here." Let's stand together as we sing.

Six Keys to Answered Prayer

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 7, 1977

Main Scripture Text: John 14:13

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

JOHN 14:13

Outline

Introduction

I. Pray in the Name of Jesus

A. Pray with His Approval

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C. Pray in His Authority

II. Pray in the Spirit

III. Pray in Obedience

IV. Pray in the Will of God

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 14 tonight. We in the time that we have remaining want to think on the subject of prayer. And I want to help you tonight to pray, because Bellevue as a church will be no greater than the composite prayer life of her people. And I as a pastor will never really rise higher than my prayer life. You as a Christian are not going to be any better than your prayer life. I'm sincere when I say that. What you are in private, what you are before the Lord, is what you really are.

And I don't know, on the other hand, a one of us that would say "I am satisfied with my prayer life." I know I'm certainly not satisfied. I had to pray, even before I thought about the message, "Adrian, are you practicing what you preach? And do you believe what you preach?" And I had to say, "Yes, I am; and, yes, I do; but I've still got a lot of room to go and to grow." And I think we all feel that way.

And so I was thinking about the disciples, and they said, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" (Luke 11:1) Now they didn't say, "Lord, teach us to preach," or, "Lord, teach us to be missionaries," or, "Teach us to pastor"; but they said, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" And that was one of the wisest requests they could have made, because, you see, prayer can do

anything that God can do. That's a good place for an amen. Prayer can do anything that God can do. *The only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God. By prayer we can move the hand that made the universe.*

I've told you before that one time down in Florida I was in my study, and I had a thought that hit me. It overwhelmed me. I cannot tell you the impact the thought had on my heart and my mind—the most staggering, revolutionary, incredible thought that ever came into my heart and my mind. You say, “Well, Pastor, tell me what it was.” Well, when I tell you, you're going to say, “Well, I knew that.” Well, I did too, but I came to believe what I already knew and to consider seriously what I said sometimes glibly. Are you ready for the thought? Here it is. God answers prayer. Now you say, “Oh, I thought you were going to say something sensational.” I did. I did! “I thought you were going to say something dynamic.” I did.

Now, you think about that. Either that statement is true or it's not true, right? Either it is true or it is not true. Friend, it is true. God answers prayer, and that means that I, a human being, a mortal, weak and fallible, can influence the God of the eternities, Almighty God. I can move Him to action. I, Adrian Rogers, can address God, and He will hear me. Now, folks, when I dwelt upon that, when I thought about that, I said, “Is that true? Can I speak to Him and He will answer me?” And then I thought on the heels of that thought, “It is true. I know it to be true. And if that is true, I am an unmitigated fool if I don't know how to pray and if I don't pray.”

Now, tonight, I want to talk to you about six keys to answered prayer. I admit that when I say six keys, that's somewhat arbitrary. I would not say *the* six keys, because this is certainly not an all-encompassing thing. But I would say these are six things that are so very simple. And I'm going to resist the temptation tonight to be complicated or resist the temptation tonight to be sensational. I just want to get right back to the very rudimentary things about prayer, the very basic things about prayer. And I want to tell you six things that begin with the little letter *n* that will help you to pray.

I. Pray in the Name of Jesus

First of all, pray in the name of Jesus. Look in John 14 and verse 13. By the way, let's use our Bibles tonight. John 14, verse 13—Jesus said, “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*” (John 14:13) And, by the way, that's the key. That's what it means to ask in Jesus' name: that the Father may be glorified in the Son. “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

And then again, in John chapter 16, verses 23 and 24, Jesus said, “*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.*” He's talking about when He goes back to heaven. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy*

the prayer's going to Heaven. Not necessarily so.

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?

A. Pray with His Approval

Well, first of all, it means to pray with His approval—something He approves. Now when a person puts his name on something, it means he has approved it. *When I was a kid, I used to have a baseball bat, and a very famous baseball player—I believe in those days it was Ted Williams—had his name on the bat. That meant Ted Williams said, “This is the kind of a bat I would approve. I put my name on it.”* Now Jesus has to approve your prayer before you can put His name on that prayer with His approval.

B. Pray for His Acclaim

Now here's what else it means. It means for His acclaim. *When we celebrated twenty-five years here, some wonderful people got together and they said, “Pastor, we're going to plant some trees in Israel in your name.”* That means what? “In your honor, for your acclaim”—this will be the Adrian Rogers grove of trees. It has my name on it. So not only “with my approval,” but “for my acclaim.”

C. Pray in His Authority

And then also, “in the name” means “with His authority.” *Now, when a person puts his name on a check, what does that mean? That means that the bank teller has the authority to give you some money out of that bank, because your name is on that check. You are authorized the withdrawal of your money. Or you sign a check and give it to somebody else: that gives them the right to go and take some of your money out of the bank, because you put your name on that check.*

Now, when we pray in the name of Jesus, if we expect to get our prayers answered, we pray in the name of Jesus, with His approval, for His acclaim, in His authority. Just saying, “In the name of Jesus”—that doesn't mean that it's in the name of Jesus. You ask in His name that the Father may be glorified in the Son. So, rule number one, or key number one: Pray in the name of Jesus. Now if you're listening by radio, or if you're in this building tonight, and you're not a Christian, you have no right, no authority—none whatsoever—to pray in the name of Jesus until you've bowed the knee to Jesus and received Him as your Lord and Savior.

II. Pray in the Spirit

Second thing: Not only do you pray in the name, but, number two, you pray in the Spirit. Praying in the name is the first step. But you also pray in the Spirit.

Now, let's look at some scriptures. For example, turn to Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18. Paul tell us to put on the whole armor of God, and then he says, *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 6:18) Now, when he

says, “praying in the Spirit,” he doesn’t mean with a lot of razzmatazz. It doesn’t mean with histrionics. He’s not trying to say, “Whip it up,” like we have a good football spirit. He’s talking about the Holy Spirit. You’re praying in the Holy Spirit.

Jude, for example, verse 20, says, *“But ye, beloved...”*—now Jude chapter 1, verse 20—*“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”* (Jude 1:20) Now, why do we pray in the Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer.

Over in the book of Zechariah there’s a wonderful verse talking about the time when the Jewish people would wholesale come to Christ. The Lord is talking about the House of David, and He says, *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.”* (Zechariah 12:10) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace. Oh, thank God for that! And He is the Spirit of supplications. The *“supplications”*—that’s just a big word for prayer. And so the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer.

And when you pray in the Spirit, some wonderful things happen that I’m going to talk about in just a moment. Well, let’s talk about them right now. Turn to Romans chapter 8 with me for a moment and look, if you will, in verse 26—Romans chapter 8 and verse 26—one of the great prayers of praying in the Spirit. It says, *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself”*—and that may be properly translated “Himself”—*“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) So that’s praying in the Spirit.

And what does this verse mean? Well, it means that the Holy Spirit inspires; the Holy Spirit guides; the Holy Spirit energizes; the Holy Spirit helps our praying. Now you don’t pray in the flesh; you pray in the Spirit, because you and I have two problems. I have them, and you have them. The first problem that we have is ignorance, and the second problem we have is weakness. Now we all have that. Now we might as well admit it for one thing, because it is true. The Apostle Paul included himself here when he said, *“For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”* That’s ignorance. And then he said, *“The Spirit [Himself] helpeth our infirmities.”* That means “weaknesses.”

Now, if Paul had ignorance and weakness when it comes to prayer, then you and I have ignorance, and you and I have weakness, when it comes to prayer. That’s the reason we need the Holy Spirit of God—because He is the answer to our ignorance and our infirmity. He says, *“For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [Himself] maketh intercession for us...according to the will of God.”*

So sometimes we’re praying, and we’re asking for things, and we really don’t know what we’re asking for. I mean, we’re asking God to do one thing; God wants to do

another thing. Does that mean that prayer is wasted? No, that doesn't mean it's wasted. God said, "God the Holy Spirit makes intercession." He says, "Now, Father, there's Adrian down there. He's asking you to do so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so. But Adrian, he doesn't know what he really needs. But he's sincere; bless his heart, he's sincere. Now, Father, here's what he's asking, but here's what he needs. And, Father, don't give him what he asks; give him what he needs."

Now the Spirit makes intercession according to the will of God. I'll give you an example. Back in 1984, we decided we were going to move the facility from out in midtown out here, one of the most wonderful things that ever happened. But before that time we were trying to build downtown. When I first came to Bellevue in 1972, we had an auditorium that seated about 3,000, but we were running 1,300 in Sunday School. You can imagine what 1,300 in Sunday School would do to a 3,000-seat auditorium. You could shoot a shotgun through there and not hit anybody. And then the church began to grow, and it filled up. And we said, "Well, we'll start another service." And so we started another service—an eight o'clock service. And that filled up, and so we said, "Well, we'll start another service." And we started a 9:30 service, and that filled up.

So there was 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00. I was preaching three times, back to back. By the time I got to the third service, I couldn't think: "Am I getting ready to say it, or did I just say it?" And I would come home on Sunday nights literally so tired I couldn't go to sleep. I'd stay up and watch Jerry Falwell or someone until—you know, on television, just be so tired and so forth—we decided we had to build. And we just needed a bigger sheep shed, because God was blessing. And we praised Him for that. And so we decided that we would buy some more property.

Now we had twenty-five acres downtown, but we had parking problems, and we needed more facilities. And so we started going to our neighbors. And up until this time, folks, we'd been able to buy property as we needed it. But somehow, I think, some people saw us coming, and they said, "Uh huh, that big church needs this property." And so the prices began to escalate and escalate. And, boy, I would talk to the Lord about it. And especially one particular man—I'm not going to call his name—but I felt that that man was being very unfair in what he was asking for some property, and so forth. And I began to tell God about that and, you know, to pray and to pray and to pray and to pray. And it seemed like it got harder and harder.

And I can remember Roland Maddox, a former member of our church, now over in Nashville, told me—he said, "Pastor, you know that piece of property, *da da da da da*?" He said, "The man just went up on the price of it." Boy, it flew all over me. And I said, "Praise God." Then, I said this: "No two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils is going to stop what God is doing." And we didn't buy that property. And I am so glad we didn't. Praise God. Praise God! I'm so glad we didn't, because we needed this property.

God knew a plan. I didn't know the plan. I had no vision of this plan—nothing about this. But God knew, and the Holy Spirit said, “Now, Father, he's wanting this piece of property downtown. But, Father, what he needs is out on Appling Road.” And I didn't know this property was out here. But we sent some men out here, Caleb and Joshua, to spy out the land. Morris Mills and Roland Maddox came out here, and they put together a deal and put all this property together. And, folks, it came together in direct reverse in ease to the difficulty we were having in trying to buy the property downtown, which was so difficult. This just came together just like that.

And the congregation approved it so enthusiastically. And after we'd bought the property, and after we came out here, and after we had the Chest of Joash and raised the money—those were glory days—one of the former owners of this property came to me and said, “Pastor, I didn't tell you this, but I got my piece of property from a man—sort of a preacher type, who used to walk around out here, used to walk around and pray that God would put a church out here.” Isn't that something? Isn't that something how God works? You see, the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered.

And the Holy Spirit is like a transformer. If you were to take the power in those great high-tension wires and drop it down into your fan, your toaster, your air conditioner, in your house, it would cook them. But it goes through a transformer, and that same energy is transformed and made acceptable so it can be used in your house to run your appliances. The Holy Spirit is the transformer. He takes our prayer energy, and He makes it adaptable to our needs. And it goes through that Holy Ghost transformer. And that's the reason we pray in the Spirit.

And if God doesn't give you what you want, He'll give you something better than you want. If He doesn't give you what you want, He'll give you what you need. And that's the reason you need to pray in the Spirit.

And then the Bible says, “*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities*”—that is, “our weaknesses.” Now the word *help* is an interesting word. It has a double prefix in front of it in the Greek language, and it literally means “instead of” and “along with.”

Now, how does the Holy Spirit pray for us? He prays for us instead of us, but He prays for us along with us. Now what it means is that He does it instead of us, but He does it along with us. It means that we cannot do it without Him; it means that He will not do it without us. That He takes hold of it means that together we get the prayer answered. And our weakness literally is a strength, because we cast ourselves upon Him.

So, how do we pray? In the name of Jesus, in the Spirit. We pray in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.

III. Pray in Obedience

Well, I must rush on, because I could spend a little more time there, but I don't want to. Here's the third thing that you must do if you would get your prayers answered. Not only do you pray in the name, and not only do you pray in the Spirit, but you pray in obedience.

Now I believe this is where most of us fail. I believe, thus far, most of you are saying, "Checking that off. That's fine, Pastor." But, folks, I want to tell you something now that is as clear as anything can be in the Bible concerning prayer. If you pray with a disobedient spirit, you're not going to get your prayers answered. If you did, God would be doing a terrible thing. God would be encouraging you to disobey. But the Bible knows that you cannot pray and get prayers answered if you're living a disobedient life.

Now David knew better. David said in Psalm 66 and verse 18, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* (Psalm 66:18) Now, folks, that's black print on white paper; it couldn't be any plainer. Thank God it doesn't say, "If I've sinned, the Lord will not hear me," because if it said that, He wouldn't hear me, wouldn't hear you, wouldn't hear—especially wouldn't hear—Bob Sorrell. "If I've sinned, the Lord will not hear me"—he doesn't say that. What he does say is this: *"If I regard iniquity in my heart..."*

Now here's what some Baptists will say: "Well, we're not sinless or perfect. Nobody's perfect. Everybody has his little pet sin. This is my little pet sin."

Let my Bible represent sin, because it tells about sin. You say, "Well, I've got my little pet sin. I love that sin. That's a nice little sin, a little harmless sin." I have that sin. And where do I have that sin? In my heart. Right there—in my heart. Now I come to pray, and I say, "Now, God, I need thus and such..." "Nice little sin..." "Lord, would you do this? Would you do that?" And I have regard for iniquity. I have it right there in my heart. Do you think for a skinny minute that God's going to hear that prayer? If He did, what would He be doing? He'd be saying, "Adrian, you can live a godless, sinful life, and I will still bless you." But, friend, the Bible says clearly and plainly—and David knew better—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Isaiah knew better. Listen to Isaiah chapter 1, verses 13 and following: *"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil."* (Isaiah 1:13–16) God says, "You're going through your religious motions, your rituals, your incantations—that means nothing to me. I'm sick of it. I'm

weary of it. I don't want to hear it. When you speak, I'll turn away my face. I'll hide my eyes and stop my ears from your prayer."

David knew better. Isaiah knew better. Isaiah said in Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2, *"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."*—"God is not palsied, and God is not deaf"—*"but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."* (Isaiah 59:1–2)

James knew better. James said in James chapter 5, verse 16, *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (James 5:16)

The Apostle John knew better than to try to play with sin. He said in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 22, *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."* (1 John 3:22)

Israel sinned against God when Achan took of the accursed thing, and therefore they were defeated at Ai. And maybe you know the story, and maybe you don't, but just remember this part of it: There was a man named Joshua, who was their leader, who fell on his face before God, and he said, "O God, why did you let this happen?" And God said to Joshua, "Joshua, get up off your face. Israel hath sinned." (Joshua 7:11) That is, "Joshua, quit praying, and deal with the sin."

Do you know what many of us do? We think that God's just going to bless us; He's going to blow past our sin, and He's just going to bless us anyhow. You cannot use prayer as a smokescreen to hide your sin. And I'm telling you, you're wasting your breath if you pray with any, any, any, any, any, any un-confessed sin in your life. Don't do it.

Now I want to ask you this question: Is there any sin—anything—worth God not hearing your prayer? *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* It doesn't say "if I am perfect," because if I have sin in my heart, I don't have to regard it. I can confess it and be clean, isn't that right? God will hear that prayer always—the prayer of confession and cleansing.

IV. Pray in the Will of God

Now, here's the fourth thing. Look. Pray in the name. Pray in the Spirit. Pray in obedience. Number four, pray in the will of God. First John chapter 5 and verse 14: *"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) That's the reason I said in the introduction, there's nothing that lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God.

"Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, I'd like to pray in the will of God. How can I know

the will of God?” May I tell you, to begin with, you need to want it. Do you want the will of God? I mean, do you really want the will of God? Do you know what most of us do? We search for the will of God to find out what it is, to see if we really want it. We say, “Lord, you show me, and I’ll let you know whether or not I’ll do it.”

You need to come to God—if you would know the will of God, you need to get a blank sheet of paper, as it were, and sign your name at the bottom, and fill it in. You say, “Well, if I were to do that, no telling what God would ask me to do or make me do.” Makes no difference. “Well, I might end up as a missionary in Pago Pago.” Makes no difference. Friend, there is not one reason on earth that God should hear your prayer, give you anything, equip you for anything, help you in any way, if you’re not yielded to do His will. Your heart may be seemingly clean, but you must obey Him instantly.

Are you ready to obey Him? I mean, are you ready to say, “Lord, I will go; I will stay; I will speak; I will give; I will live; I will do anything you want me to do”? The Bible says, “Be not conformed of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, and then you will know what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.” (Romans 12:2) Don’t be afraid of the will of God. The will of God is good; it is perfect; it is acceptable. *And prayer is not bending God’s will to fit your will. Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.*

One of the most beautiful definitions of prayer I’ve ever read is this: “Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, then the Holy Spirit putting that desire into our heart, and then the Holy Spirit sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross.” *The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* That’s a good place for an amen. *The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.” (Romans 11:36) What we do in prayer is we just simply close the circuit. “*This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*”

“Well, Pastor, I don’t always know the will of God, so how can I pray in faith?” You can pray in faith, whether you know the will of God or not. “Now, how can I do that, Pastor?” If you don’t know what God wants you to do, you can pray in faith that He will show you. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth liberally to all men and upbraideth not”—He won’t scold you—“...only let him ask in faith.” (James 1:5–6) So if you don’t know, you still ask in faith.

I talked about how we moved out here to this property. Let me tell you how I came to Bellevue Baptist Church. I was down there in Merritt Island, Florida. David said up here, “I hope to go to heaven from Bellevue.” David, that’s exactly what I said. I was interviewed by the newspaper down there at Merritt Island, Florida, the Sunday supplement. They did a Sunday supplement in the newspaper down there. I had my picture on the front page of the Sunday supplement. I’m standing there in our church

building, and it says, “Rev. Rogers and His Island in the Sun.” That was the name of the article: “Rev. Rogers and His Island in the Sun.” And they interviewed me, and they said, “What are your plans?” I said, “I expect to go to heaven from Merritt Island.” Those are the words I used right there within that article: “I expect to go to heaven from Merritt Island.”

Joyce and I were going to go on a vacation, and we were part owners in a motor home, and we were going up to New England. We’d never been up there—still didn’t get up there, because this church intercepted us. On the way up there I called home, and my son said, “Dad, there are some people who want to talk to you.” I said, “Who, or where, or what?” He said, “Well, it’s some folks from a place in Memphis—Bellevue.” And I knew the church was without a pastor. And I said, “Well...” Joyce said, “Are you going to call?” I said, “Nope.” She said, “You’re not going to call?” I said, “No.” I said, “No, I’m just exactly where I ought to be. I’m not going to call.”

And so we’re in Lynchburg, Virginia, at a K.O.A. camp with that motor home on a Sunday afternoon. I’d been to Jerry Falwell’s church that morning, and talked to Jerry, and so forth. Joyce said, “Adrian, are you going to call?” I said, “No.” She said, “You’ve got to return your phone calls.” I said, “All right.” So I went to a payphone and I called the guy, Roland Maddox. Roland Maddox said, “We want to come and talk with you about being our pastor.” I said, “Well, thanks. I’m honored. But God would have to write it in the sky.” Folks, I want to tell you, I was as happy as a dead pig on ice down in Florida. Now I had no desire to go anywhere; had a wonderful church. They loved me. I loved them. It was a growing church. And we were happy in the Lord.

And he said, “Listen. We’ve spent a lot of money on you. We’ve been down there to hear you,” and all this. “The least you could do is have the decency to talk with us.” I said, “Well, that’s right.” I said, “I’ll just turn the motor home. I’m in Tennessee. So it’s all right. I’m in Tennessee. I’ll just drive right over there.” Now, folks, you get a map, and you look from one corner of Tennessee, up there near Lynchburg—Kingsport—down here to Memphis, you’ll go for forty months. And finally, I got over here and met with this committee. And these people began to talk to us. And, folks, it was so confusing—so confusing—because they said, “We know that you’re the man. We’ve prayed. We’re unanimous.”

Jim Whitmire had been up here with the youth choir, and he came through there. When I went back from Memphis, he didn’t know I’d been here. I didn’t know he’d been here. He showed me a picture of the Bellevue Church. He said, “Pastor, look at that.” I thought, “Boy, that’s the devil’s trick.” I opened a magazine. I got back to my office after my vacation and there was a stack of mail *like that* on my desk. There was a magazine—a trade magazine. I didn’t subscribe to it. I don’t know how it got on my desk—only one I’ve ever seen like it. And it had a centerfold. But it wasn’t a girl. The

centerfold had letters about that high. It said: “Assignment Memphis.” I just opened to that. I looked at that and said, “That’s another devil’s trick.” “The Assignment”—I was so confused. We fasted and prayed, and we could not get this thing out of our heart. And finally, I just said, “Lord, Lord, I want to know your will. I want to do your will. But I do not know what is your will.” I met with friends. I got friends to fast and pray.

Well, here’s the point, folks. God showed me His will. It took a period of time, but God was so faithful. You know, the Bible says, *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”* (Proverbs 4:18) That means, at first, it’s dark. And then, it is gray dawn—you just can see dark shadows, but they’re no color. And then, you can begin to see the color, but the shadows are long and you don’t see a lot of definition. And then, it gets brighter and brighter. And after a while, it’s high noon, and there are no shadows at all.

Folks, I want to tell you, it’s high noon with me, and it has been for twenty-five years. I know I’m where God put me. And I just thank God that God reveals His will to you. You can pray in faith even if you don’t know the will of God. Pray with the faith that God will show you His will. Just keep on praying. And *“the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”* *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”*

V. Pray in Fellowship

Now, here’s the last thing—and I’m sorry I have taken as much time as I have. I say the last thing—I know that that’s only four. I’ll just give you the fifth one real quick. Pray in fellowship.

Now, if there’s anybody that you’re out of fellowship with, forget it, as far as getting your prayers answered. Here’s the scripture—Mark 11, verses 25 and 26: *“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”* (Mark 11:25–26) Now, folks, that verse says a lot of things, but one thing it says is this: that it is foolish to pray if you are harboring grudges in your heart. Now, is the carnal satisfaction of a grudge against somebody else worth not having your prayers answered?

And many times the problem is at home between a husband and wife. Let me give you another verse of Scripture. It’s 1 Peter 3, verse 7, and it says concerning husbands and their wives, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them”—*that is “your wives”—*“according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter 3:7) If you’re not treating your wife with respect, if you and your wife are not living in fellowship together, if you and your husband are at one another’s throats, your prayers

are hindered. Pray in fellowship. Is there anybody that you have anything against?

Before I came out here, I got on my knees, I told the Lord what I was going to tell you, and I asked God—I said, “Lord, search my heart. Is there anybody on the face of this earth that I harbor hostility to?” And the Spirit gave back the clear answer, “No, not one.” You say, “Adrian, that’s wonderful.” No, I don’t mean it that way. I don’t get any credit for that. That’s the grace of God. I would be a sheer fool to stand up here and preach, a sheer fool to get on my knees and try to pray, if I have in my heart an unforgiving spirit, because Jesus loved me, died for me, and He said, “*Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” (Ephesians 4:32) Pray in fellowship.

VI. Pray in Faith

Now, here’s the last one of these six things: Pray in faith. You say, “Why didn’t you mention that one first?” Because that one is the fruit of the first five. When you deal with these other things, when you’ve come this way, when you pray in the name of Jesus, when you pray in the Spirit, when you pray in obedience, when you pray with a clean heart, you pray in fellowship, you pray in the will of God, then you’re going to find faith; *ipso facto*, faith is there.

Now, why is it necessary to pray in faith? Matthew 21, verse 22: “*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*” (Matthew 21:22) *Pray and believe—you receive. Pray and doubt—you’ll do without.* You can’t get your prayers answered apart from faith. Why? Hebrews 11:6: “*But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” (Hebrews 11:6)

George Mueller from Bristol, England, a man of yesteryear, was a mighty man of faith, a mighty man of prayer. He kept a journal. In that journal, he had listed 25,000 answers to prayer—25,000. Somebody said to him, “Mr. Mueller, what is the secret to getting your prayers answered?” You know what he said? “Have faith in God.” Pretty simple, isn’t it? “Have faith in God.” And here’s the way he said it. I wasn’t there, but I’m almost certain here’s the way he said it. He didn’t say, “Have *faith* in God.” He said, “Have faith in *God*”—“in *God*.” It’s not our faith; it’s our God. It’s not so much great faith in God, but faith in a great God, that leads to great faith. Have faith in God. We sang it: “What a Mighty God We Serve.”

Conclusion

Now, folks, God wants to answer your prayers. And these are six keys. There may be others. Surely there are. But start with these six.

Six Keys to Answered Prayer

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 10, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 14:13–14

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“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

JOHN 14:13

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word tonight and be finding John 14, if you will, for our Bible study, which tonight is going to be on “Prayer.” John chapter 14.

Sometimes a person may say something like this: “You know, believe it or not, ha, ha, God answered my prayer.” Now, we ought not to be surprised when God answers prayer. We ought to be surprised when God does not answer prayer. When you walk into your bedroom tonight and reach over there on the wall and flick the switch and the light comes on, that ought not to surprise you. Now if you flick the switch and the light doesn’t come on, that ought to surprise you. And if the light does not come on, would you say, “Just as I suspected. Electricity is a failure. There’s nothing to it.” No, you wouldn’t say that. If you flicked a switch and the light doesn’t come on, what would you say? “There is something wrong.” It could be a number of things. Maybe the switch is broken. Maybe the bulb is burned out. Maybe the fuse is blown. Maybe you didn’t pay the light bill. But something’s wrong. You would not say that electricity has failed. You ought not to be surprised when God answers prayer. You ought to be surprised if God does not answer prayer. But you should never say that prayer is a failure. You may say, “There is something wrong. Why has God not answered my prayer?” I want to give you tonight six keys to answered prayer. And I hope you’ll get these things in your heart.

They're very simple. Nothing new, but something we need to be reminded of, and I needed to be reminded of as I gathered these things together in my heart and in my mind.

I. You Must Pray in the Name of Jesus

If you would get your prayers answered, number one, you must pray in the name of Jesus. Now look, if you will, please in John 14, verses 13 and 14. Jesus Christ said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask (now here it is) in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." God wants to glorify His Son, the Lord Jesus, and that's the reason you must pray in His name. And then Jesus ramifies it again by saying, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." And then, go over to chapter 16. And, again, our Lord emphasizes this same fact. Look, if you will, John 16, verses 23 and 24: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, I say unto you that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." That is, "You can't ask Me. I won't be here. But you can still ask in My name." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." You show me a person who's getting his prayers answers and I'll show you a person full of joy. Now Jesus has also said in John chapter 14 and verse 6, that verse that we all know, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Now that is true in prayer. There is no way to come to God except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now if you're lost sometime on a city street, you stop and ask a person directions, and they say, "Well, go down here three blocks. Turn right. You'll come to the white house with the picket fence. Then turn left and you'll come to a dead end street. Go left three blocks. Then turn right." And you say, "Wait a minute. I can't remember all that. Hold it. Give it to me again." They tell you again. You say, "I'm sorry. Let me write it down." And they say, "Now, wait a minute. I'm going that way. Just let me take you." Now they're not then just pointing the way; they become the way. Our Lord is the way to the Father. He doesn't just point the way. When you pray in Jesus' name, He brings you into the presence of the Father.

I was looking at Ephesians chapter 2 tonight in my study and verse 18. And it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it says, "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." By Jesus. What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? Well, always it means to pray in the name of Jesus, it means to pray with His authority. When you put your name on a piece of paper called a check, and give it to someone else, that name represents your authority. And with that you can give it to the bank and the bank, because your name is on it, has the right to give to the individual who holds that piece of paper some of your money because your name is on it. Now if you go to the bank and ask for some of my money without one of my checks, they ought not to

give it to you. They ought to say, “No, I’m sorry, we can’t do that. We’re not authorized to give away this man’s money.” But if my name is there, and you can say, “Oh, but, wait a minute. I have his name on a piece of paper. He has authorized this. He approves this,” then the bank can assayed to your request.

Now when we ask in the name of Jesus, we’re not just sprinkling a little religious foo-foo dust on our prayers, some, some sort of little magic formula that says, “I, in the name of Jesus, ipso facto, we have what we desire.” Oh no. It means that our Lord has ordered it and, therefore, He will pay the bill. It means that our Lord has approved it. It means that it will give Him glory and honor and that the Father will be glorified by what we do in the name of Jesus Christ. So that means that if you pray without using the name of Jesus legitimately, you really should not expect your prayer to be answered. So, number one, the first key is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. And, obviously, that means that you must be saved, that you must be His disciple, that you must be in touch with Him to know His will.

II. You Must Pray in the Spirit

The second key to answered prayer is this: Not only do you pray in the name, but you also pray in the Spirit, in the Spirit. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6. And I think it’ll do you good to turn to it. You probably have this marked in your Bible, but if not, just turn to it. And if you have difficulty finding Ephesians, General Electric Power Company – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Now look, if you will, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18. The Bible says here that we are to be, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” There are a lot of alls in that sentence, but they all just kind of coese around the hub, which is “...in the Spirit...” Now just as you must pray in the name of Jesus, you must pray in the Spirit.

Over near the end of the Old Testament there’s also an interesting verse, and I want you to turn to it. It’s found in the book of Zechariah. That’s a little harder to find, but not too hard to find. Just go to Matthew and turn left and you’ll come to Zechariah before long. And turn to Zechariah chapter 12 and mark verse 10 if you will. Zechariah **chapter 12 God** speaks of what He’s going to do in the last days when the Jews, as a nation, come to Jesus. And I can hardly wait for that day. And tears come to my eyes many times when I read this verse of Scripture. They just almost involuntarily pop out of my eyes as I read this and I anticipate this day where God says, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” Now there are a lot of

wonderful things in that verse, but the thing that blesses me is that God says there's a spirit. And, of course, obviously, He's the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of grace and of supplication.

Do you have difficulty praying? Do you know why? You're not Spirit-filled. When you are Spirit-filled, praise and prayer flows out of you when you're Spirit-filled. You are constantly praising God and constantly full of supplication praying in the Spirit. God says one day He's going to pour of the spirit of grace and supplication upon the Jew, but He's already poured out the spirit of grace and supplication upon you. And, therefore, you must pray in the Spirit.

Now go to next to the last book in the Bible, the book of Jude. It's a little, short letter. It's probably not even a letter. It's more like a postcard. But look, if you will, in verse 20. Jude, just before Revelation. Verse 20: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, praying in the Holy Ghost." Have you ever noticed that? How do you get yourself built up? You pray in the Holy Ghost. Why is it so important to pray in the Spirit? Well, we know that when we pray in the name of Jesus, we pray with authority. But when we pray in the Spirit, we pray with strength because He helps us. I've given you these other verses.

Now turn to Romans 8 and let me show you something. Look in Romans 8 and verse 26. One of the great, great, great, great prayer verses in all of the Bible is Romans 8 and verse 26. "Likewise the Spirit (talking about the Holy Spirit) also helpeth our infirmities (that is, our weaknesses): for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself (and that may be translated Himself) maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Now look at the word *helpeth*. Do you see it? "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities..." The word *helpeth*, the Greek word means to take hold of. And, actually, it has a double prefix. It means to take hold of, but it means to take hold of instead of and along with. Almost sounds contradictory, doesn't it? The Spirit of God helps, He takes hold of, instead of, and along with us as we pray. Now both of those things are there. Now what does that mean? It means, my friend, that when you pray, you cannot do it without Him and He will not do it without you. Instead of and along with. It is the Spirit who is praying. He does for you what you cannot do for yourself, but He does it along with you. The Holy Spirit of God inspires your prayer, guides your prayer, energizes your prayer, and sustains your prayer. You see, we're weak. The Spirit is willing (that is, the human spirit), but the flesh is weak. And, therefore, the Holy Spirit helps that weakness.

There's not a one of us but what says over and over again, "I fail in my prayer life," don't we? "Wish I could pray more. Why don't I pray more?" I'll tell you why we don't pray more. Because, folks, let's admit it. We are weak. But that weakness need not be a liability; it may be an incredible strength, because the Bible says when we're weak, then

we're strong if we will learn to depend upon the Holy Spirit, who, number one, helps our infirmities by energizing, inspiring, guiding, and enabling us. But not only does He energize us, but He informs us. He helps us in our ignorance. Look again at this, verse, verse 26. Romans 8:26: "...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." Have you ever thought about that?

I was in a Bible conference in Dallas last night. And, at the close of the Bible conference, two young seminarians came up. One of them looked at me and he said, "Do you pray?" I said, "Yes." Well, he handed me a little slip of paper. He said, "Well, here are the names of two seminary students. Pray for us. Put us on your prayer list." I said, "Well, thank you." And I slipped that piece of paper in my Bible. And I have prayed for those two boys, but I doubt I'll do it on a regular basis, not because I don't care for them, but a prayer assignment is more than somebody handing you a slip of paper. If I prayed for everything that everybody asked me to pray for, and if I put everybody's name on my prayer list that asked me to put their name on my prayer list, folks, I never would get finished praying. That's the truth. If you try to pray for everything, your prayer, rather than being a mighty river, will become a stagnant swamp. Prayer, to be powerful, has to be channeled. When people tell me that they pray for me, I am so incredibly blessed to think that someone would pray for me. And there are people who say to me, "I pray for you every day." That humbles me. There are almost six billion people on this earth. If you've got someone praying for you every day, you've got something. There are a lot of people that you can pray for, folks. If you're on somebody's prayer list, you are blessed. But I don't want to be on anybody's prayer list that the Holy Spirit has not assigned me to be on that prayer list. "...we know not what we should pray for us as we ought..." And when you're praying for an individual, you don't know how to pray for them many times.

Your Aunt Susie may be sick, and you may be praying, "O God, please heal Aunt Susie." How do you know God doesn't want to take Aunt Susie to heaven? You're praying, "Lord, let her stay," and Jesus is praying in John 17, "Father, I pray for those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." And you're saying, "Lord, let her stay," and Jesus is saying, "Lord, let her come." What's right?

Have you ever noticed in the average prayer meeting we pray a whole lot more for people to get healed than we do for people to get saved? We're more interested in keeping the saved out of heaven than we are the lost out of hell. We don't know what to pray for sometimes as we ought. Do you ever think about it? I mean, when, when, when Saul was persecuting the early church before he became the apostle Paul, I wonder how the church was praying about Saul. I think if I'd have been back there, I'd have said, "Lord, eradicate him. Eliminate him. Evaporate him. Do something to him. Get rid

of him. Strike him dead.” And God didn’t strike him dead. God struck him alive and made the great apostle Paul out of him. We don’t know what to pray for.

I used to pray, “Lord, why don’t those bunch of politicians get I-40 through Overton Park so everybody can come to Bellevue Baptist Church.” And I’m an environmentalist myself about 90% of the way. The other 10% of those folks just kill me. A bunch of tree huggers. “Lord, let that road go through there.” I mean, I prayed about it. I mean, serious, industrial-strength prayer. “Lord, let that road go through there.” Never did. But, you know, we’re having an interchange built right out here with the money that would have been used to put that road through there. Aren’t you glad God knows a lot of things we don’t know? All right. You know, we don’t know what to pray for as we ought. The Holy Spirit says, “Now, Lord, this is what he says, but this is what he wants.”

I can tell you, I’ve had times when I knew that I wasn’t going to preach. I had a guest preacher already lined up. And I’d have somebody in my study. And they’d come in, and they’d bowed their head, and they’d say, “Now, Father, bless the pastor as he preaches tonight.” I don’t want to interrupt the prayer, but I’m saying, “I ain’t preaching tonight. Somebody else is preaching.” But don’t you know that God knows that somebody else is going to preach? So the Holy Spirit’s up there saying, “Now, Father, this is what he’s asking, but this is what he wants. He doesn’t know, poor thing, but his heart is right. “You see, that’s what the Holy Spirit of God does. The Holy Spirit of God, He helps our infirmity, our weakness when we don’t know how to pray, don’t have the strength to pray, don’t have the energy to pray, don’t have the desire to pray. The Holy Spirit of God infuses us.

And then He intercedes for us, instead of and along with. And the Bible says “...with groanings that cannot be uttered.” Friend, you’ll never pray like He can pray. And that word for groanings is the word that is used for a woman in travail, having a baby. That’s what praying in the Spirit is. And sometimes He groans through us. Sometimes we don’t even know what to ask.

A couple of years ago, I went through deep sorrow. I found myself not even knowing how to articulate a prayer. Could not even do something sometimes except just groan. But God the Holy Spirit, heard my prayer.

III. You Must Pray in Obedience to God

You pray, first key, in the name of Jesus. Second key, in the Spirit. And to pray in the name of Jesus, you’ve got to be saved. And to pray in the Spirit, you’ve got to be filled with the Spirit. The third key. Not only must you pray in the name of Jesus, not only must you pray in the Spirit, but you must pray in obedience to God. It is foolish and wicked to expect God to hear your prayer when you are not living in obedience. Now there are some people who have the idea that God will bless you in your disobedience,

but be reasonable. If you're living a life of disobedience, and God is answering your prayer, then what is God doing? God is encouraging and rewarding your sin. God loves you too much to do that.

Turn with me to Psalm 66. Let me show you something. Psalms is about the middle book of the Bible. Easy to find. Look, if you will, in Psalm 66 and verse 18. If this is not marked in your Bible, it ought to be. It's not marked in mine. Let me mark it right here. All right. Now look. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Hey, folks, that's black print on white paper. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out. Say, "Why didn't God answer my prayer?" Well, there it is. Everybody talks about the great prayer promises, the great prayer promises. Well, that's a promise. God says, "I promise not to hear you." It's a promise. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Period! It doesn't say if I've sinned, God will not hear me. He wouldn't hear me, and He wouldn't hear you, and He wouldn't hear anybody. The word *regard* means if I make peace with sin, if I have a pet sin, a sin that I'm harboring, then God will not hear me. You say, "But, Oh, Pastor, my prayers are so beautiful. Surely, God's impressed." All right, just fast forward to the Book of Isaiah. Let me show you a verse.

Turn to Isaiah chapter 1. Look in verse 13: "Bring no more vain oblations..." Do you know what a vain oblation is? Sounds terrible, doesn't it? It's just a blathering prayer. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me..." Here they were in the temple swinging the incense, the sensor, burning incense on their altar. "...the new moons and sabbaths..." That's their special days of worship. "...the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity..." God doesn't say, that I will not just regard it. God says it, it's iniquity. "...even the solemn meeting." You come, put on a long face. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." God says, "I hate them. I'm bothered with them. I'm tired of them." And verse 15: "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." What's God saying? God's saying, "Don't pull that religious hocus-pocus on Me." All of your solemn assemblies and all of that, God says, "You stretch forth your hands. You angry. You make me angry." I mean, it is an affront to a holy God.

You're in Isaiah. Just fast forward to Isaiah 59, verse 1: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save..." God's not palsied. "...neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." God is not deaf. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." That's plain.

Turn to the book of Ezra. How long has it been since you've done a little reading in

Ezra? In Ezra chapter 9 and verse 6. Ezra is praying, recording his prayer life, and he says, and he said, “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespasses are grown up into the heavens.” You must pray, friend, in obedience.

Now let me just sum this up by turning to 1 John back in the back of the New Testament again, almost to the Book of the Revelation. Not the gospel of John, but 1 John, and look with me in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 22. This just seems to encapsulate it all. “And whatsoever we ask (here it is), whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.”

Answered prayer is not for rebels. It’s so plain. Answered prayer is not for rebels. It’s so plain. Do you remember when, Israel had conquered Jericho and then they went out against a little, two-bit, town called Ai? A little name, little town. Two letters in it – A,i. And they fled like whipped puppies, ignominiously defeated. And Joshua goes and he gets on his face before God, and he says, “God, how did You let this happen?” And God says in Joshua chapter 7, verses 10 and 11, “Joshua, get up off your face! Israel has sinned.” What was he saying? He’s saying, “Josh, son, why are you praying to Me? You can’t use prayer as a smokescreen to hide your sin in. There’s sin in the camp. Deal with that sin and I’ll hear your prayers.”

IV. You Must Pray in the Will of God

Now what have we said? We’ve said you’ve got to pray in the name of Jesus. We’ve said you’ve got to pray in the Spirit. We’ve said you have to pray in obedience to God. Number four: You must pray in the will of God. Not only knowing Jesus, not only being filled with the Spirit, not only obeying the commandments, but even having done all of that, everything you wish is not necessarily God’s will for you. Now you’re in 1 John chapter 4. Look, if you will, in chapter 5 and verse 14: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if know that he, and we know, and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.” To pray in the will of God. You don’t find the will of God just by guessing at it.

Now, you say, “Pastor, how am I going to know the will of God?” Well, let me ask you a question. Do you want to know it? Well, you say, “I don’t know whether I want to know it or not.” Well, let me ask you another question. Not, do you want to know it? Do you want to do it? That’s the question. Do you want to do the will of God? You say, “Yes, I do.” Do you really? I mean, would you, would you, if God were to say to you right now, “There’s something I want you to do, will you do it?” Do you know what the first question human nature would be? “What is it, Lord?” That ought not to be the first

question or the first answer. You ought not to answer that question with a question. You ought to answer that question with an affirmation. “Adrian, there’s something I want you to do. Will you do it?” I ought to say, “Yes, I will, Lord. What is it?” Not, “What is it, Lord?” You see, the way to know the will of God is not to find out what it is, but to be committed to it before you know anything about it. That’s trust. Just say, “Lord, I am ready and I will do what You want me to do.”

Now most of us are afraid of the will of God. Now we have an idea that, you know, somehow if we just report for duty in the will of God, we’re going to end up somewhere in Pago-Pago as a missionary, live in a grass hut with dirt floor – and you may. Is there still a Pago-Pago? Was there ever? But, anyway, you must be willing to do anything God wants you to do. That’s what we preached on Sunday night. Now does that threaten you? It used to threaten me, but it doesn’t threaten me anymore, I don’t think. The way to know the will of God is to accept the will of God before you know the will of God.

Well, you say, “I want more details.” All right, I’ll give you some more detail. It is good, perfect, and acceptable (Romans 12:1 and 2). You don’t need to know anymore than that. It is good, perfect, and acceptable. That’s all you need to know. “Present yourself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God...and He will, and you’ll prove what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.” Prayer is not bending God’s will to fit your will; it is finding the will of God and getting in on it. Now we’ve got many, many sermons and lessons on how to know the will of God. But you don’t really find the will of God. The will of God finds you. It’s not an Easter egg hunt. You get your heart right with God. You present your body a living sacrifice. You be not conformed to this world, but you be transformed, and you will have a renewed mind and will begin to think the thoughts of Christ after Him and, therefore, you will be able to pray in the will of God.

V. You Must Pray in Fellowship with Believers

Number five, and I’m going to hurry along now. The fifth key. Not only pray in the will of God, but to pray in fellowship with believers, to pray in fellowship with believers.

Turn with me to Mark chapter 11, the gospel of Mark chapter 11, verses 25 and 26: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any...” Now, friend, that covers the bases. “ought and any.” “...if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” And I’ve already told you, friend, unforgiven sin is a barricade against answered prayer.

So many people wonder why their prayers are not answered, and they’re harboring grudges, feeding fevers. Is that grudge, that resentment, is it worth it? The carnal satisfaction of bearing a grudge against somebody else, I say, is it worth it not to have

your prayer answered?

Years ago, I heard about a little girl who was naughty and sent up to her room to go to bed by her mother. And the mother said, “Now, before you go to sleep, let’s have prayer.” The little girl prayed. She prayed for her brother, sister, father, prayed for her dog, prayed for her teacher, prayed for her Sunday school teacher, and said, “amen.” Then looked up at her mother and said, “I guess you noticed you were not in it.” Well, you know, I have an idea that prayer didn’t get to heaven. God’s been teaching me a lesson about this. There’s absolutely no one that you can have a unforgiving spirit toward and expect your prayer to be answered. And this is especially true about husbands and wives. First Peter chapter 3 and verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving, honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel; and as being heirs together of the grace of life (listen), that your prayers be not hindered.” You and your wife are getting along about like a cobra and a mongoose, and you wonder why your prayer is not answered.

VI. You Must Pray in Faith

Last of all, number six, the sixth key. You must pray in faith, in faith. The Scripture, Matthew chapter 21 and verse 22: “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Pray, believe, and you’ll receive. Pray and doubt, you’ll do without. “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, believing, believing, ye shall receive.”

Have you ever prayed and said, “God, I believe,” when you knew you didn’t? But you thought saying that you believed would be counted for belief. You were lying, and you knew it, and God knew it, too. But have you ever prayed and you knew that God heard your prayer and He did, and you got what you received? You see, prayer is, faith is the gift of God. It’s not something you keep in your pocket to spend for whatever you want. You cannot have faith for anything out of the will of God because God won’t give you faith for anything that’s out of His will. And you can’t have any faith except God gives it to you.

Now you say, “Well, why don’t I have more faith?” If you’ll take these first five steps, ipso facto, faith will be there. When you are praying in the name, when you’re praying in the Spirit, when you’re praying in obedience, when you are praying in fellowship, when you’re praying in the will of God, faith is there, faith is there. But if these other things are not there, faith is not there.

Have you and your wife ever had an argument? Well, let me back up. When you and your wife have an argument, and you don’t get right, and then you get down on your knees to pray for a sick child, don’t you feel silly? Don’t you feel dumb? You know that your prayer is not getting through. You don’t have any faith for answered prayer. When

you get right, then you have that faith. You see, faith comes out of all these other things.

Sometime if you want some good devotional reading, read about George Mueller of Bristol, England. Lived in yesteryear. He was a man mighty in faith. He kept a diary, and he had 25,000 recorded instances of answered prayer, recorded, answered prayer – 25,000, some of them incredibly miraculous – no way to explain them apart from God.

Somebody asked George Mueller, “What is the secret of answered prayer?” You know what he said? “Have faith in God! Have faith in God!” Pretty good, huh? Just have faith in God. But I don’t think he put it this way. I don’t think he said, “Have faith IN God.” I think he said, “Have faith in GOD, in GOD.” Ha, ha, you see, it’s not great faith that we need, but faith in a great God. Have faith in God. Not against great faith. Jesus said, “Woman, great is thy faith.” But the great faith comes from the great God. Have faith in God.

Well, faith is not just a positive feeling, not working yourself into a frenzy, but just that confidence that God is going to do what you asked Him to do.

Conclusion

Let’s bow in prayer. Lord, the disciples said, and we want to reiterate, “Teach us to pray.” And, Father, help me and teach me, that I might be more of a man of prayer. There’s something in me that resists prayer, that doesn’t want to pray, that had rather do almost anything else but pray, and I know that is a carnal, devilish nature. So, Lord, I pray that You’d help me and help us that we might be so in love with Jesus and so filled with the Spirit that prayer will flow out of us, that we might be constantly, continually in prayer. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Don't Mistreat Your Best Friend

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 7, 1990

Main Scripture Text: John 14:15

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

JOHN 14:15

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- ### Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me please, if you would, to John chapter 14 and I want to begin reading some selected verses beginning with verse 15. But, before I do may I tell you that you have a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful friend? That friend is the Holy Spirit. Now, the problem is that many of us know theologically that the Holy Spirit is a person. That is, we worship one God who has revealed Himself as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We know that theologically, but many of us fail to think of the Holy Spirit as a person. We think of the Holy Spirit almost as an influence, a force, some empowerment, or something very much like energy is in a battery. But, we fail to think of him as a dear friend. And, I want to talk to you about your best friend, who is the Holy Spirit, because he makes Jesus Christ real and alive in your heart. And, the title of the message is, *Don't Mistreat Your Best Friend*.

Now, begin reading if you will please, in verse 15. The Lord Jesus said, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter..."* And, the word "another" means "another of the same kind." *"...that he may abide with you for ever..."* Now, notice He doesn't say that it may abide, but that He

may abide with you. I hope that when you talk about me you say, “He” and not “It.” I am a person not a thing. *“...that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* Now, notice verse 18, *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you”* (John 14:15–18). Now, who comes does the Holy Spirit or Jesus? The answer is yes, The Holy Spirit. Let me give you a definition of the Holy Spirit, Christ in the Christian, that’s who the Holy Spirit is. And, we need to understand that.

Then go down to verse 26, *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”* (John 14:26). Now, I know that you believe that the Holy Spirit is God, but I want you to become acquainted with Him personally.

The Holy Spirit is to be to you today what Jesus Christ was to the disciples so long ago. May I say that? The Holy Spirit is to be to you today, what Jesus Christ was to those disciples so long ago. And, you are to treat the Holy Spirit as those disciples treated the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be your Lord, He is to be to you guide, He is to be to your director, your friend, and your comforter. And, if you don’t do this you’re going to suffer the tragedy of a barren life.

Now, let me just tell you what your best friend does for you. Let me tell you how the Holy Spirit, your best friend brought you to salvation. It was the Holy Spirit who enabled you to be saved, for example, and I want you to jot these scriptures down, I don’t think we’ll have time to turn to them this morning, but I just want you to jot them down as I share them with you. What does the Holy Spirit do in order to get you saved? How did you come to know Jesus?

A. The Holy Spirit Convicts Us of Sin

It was through the Holy Spirit of God, He convicted you that you were a sinner. Put this scripture down, John chapter 16 verses 8 and 9, the Lord Jesus speaking of the Holy Spirit said, *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me”* (John 16:8–9).

Who is it that caused you to be convicted of your sin? I remember when I was convicted of my sin, I was just a child, I remember being in an upstairs bedroom when the Holy Spirit of God spoke to my heart so definitely, so clearly, so plainly, and said to me, “Adrian, you are a sinner, and you need to be right with God.” It was a long time after that before I was saved, but I can remember how real the conviction of sin was in my heart. Now, I had not killed anybody, I had not robbed any banks, and I’d not done any terrible, horrible things. I maybe skipped a class in school or maybe disobeyed my parents, but the Holy Spirit of God told me that I was a sinner. Thank God for the Holy

Spirit of God that convicts us of sin. A courtroom may convict us of crimes, but only the Holy Spirit can convict us of sin as it is. And, then the Holy Spirit of God not only convicted you of sin but it was the Holy Spirit of God that made Jesus Christ real to you and drew you to Christ. Put this scripture down, John chapter 6 and verse 44, Jesus said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...”* (John 6:44).

Now, those of you are saved, the only reason that you were saved was God through the Holy Spirit brought you to Jesus Christ. No man can just come. Don't get the idea that anybody can just simply of his own will and his own volition come to Jesus Christ. No one could come. No one would come except the Holy Spirit brought him. The Holy Spirit, my dear friend, convicts you of sin. The Holy Spirit draws you to Jesus Christ and then the Holy Spirit opens your understanding, so you can understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Acts chapter 16 verse 14, the Bible tells how Lydia was saved. Now, Lydia was a woman of Thyatira, a seller of purple. And, the Bible speaks of her this way, *“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened...”* (Acts 16:14). Oh I love that. That's the reason before I preached this morning, I was on my knees praying, “Oh God, open hearts.” How dependent I am of the Holy Spirit of God to open hearts. I can preach the Word of God, but only the Holy Spirit of God can open hearts. I can preach it, but He must impart it. It is the Holy Spirit, my dear friend, that convicts people of sin. It is the Holy Spirit that draws people to Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit of God that opens understanding.

1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 14 says, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). You'll never ever really understand salvation until the Holy Spirit of God teaches you. And, then after you get saved, what does the Holy Spirit of God do? I mean, once you give your heart to Jesus, once you're born again what does the Holy Spirit of God do?

B. The Holy Spirit Seals Us into Christ

Well first of all, the moment you receive Christ, the Holy Spirit of God seals you into Jesus Christ.

Ephesians chapter 1 verses 13 and following, *“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...”* (Ephesians 1:13). Oh I love that. What does it mean to be sealed? It means to put the King's seal on you. The King's seal can no man break. That means you are His for time and eternity. Once you come into Jesus the Holy Spirit of God seals you into the Lord Jesus. And, that's the

reason the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19: *“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his”* (2 Timothy 2:19). You are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

C. The Holy Spirit Comes to Live in Us

And, then not only were you sealed into Jesus by the Holy Spirit, but you were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God actually came to live in you, salvation is not just getting man out of earth into Heaven, it's getting God out of Heaven in to man. And, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 19: *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

You have a royal resident. He comes to live in you. And, He's not just a guest, Jesus says that He comes to abide forever. I like what Ron Dunn has to say. He says, “My heart is not a hotel with check out time twelve noon on Sunday.” Dear friend, He comes to live in you and to abide in you and to stay in you.

D. The Holy Spirit Comforts Us in Sorrow

Now, once He does this, once He seals you into Christ, once He comes to live in you, then what is His ministry to you. Well, He comforts you in sorrow. Remember the scripture I read in John chapter 14 beginning in verse 16? I will pray the father and he will give you another comforter that He may abide with you forever. Oh what a friend He is. How this past year my heart has ached, I've known some deep sorrow. But, I can tell you, my dear friend, that God the Holy Spirit has walked with me and spoken to me. And, the word “comfort” there doesn't mean sympathy. It includes that, but that's not what it means. “Comfort,” it means “with strength,” “with strength.” He strengthens us, that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit in as He comforts us.

E. The Holy Spirit Directs Us and Gives Us Wisdom

And, not only does He comfort us, but He directs us and He gives us wisdom.

We're not meant to be floundering around, John 14 and verse 26, but the comforter, which is the holy ghost, whom the father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. You're not supposed to be like a ship without a compass, a sail, or a rudder on a dark and stormy night. God the Holy Spirit is sent to guide you, my dear friend, and to help you to understand the Word of God.

F. The Holy Spirit Gives Us Power to Serve the Lord Jesus

And, then the Holy Spirit of God gives you the power that you need to serve the Lord Jesus. Acts chapter 1 verse 8: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is*

come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..." (Acts 1:8). Now, is there anybody here who would dare deny that since the Holy Spirit bears the name of Jesus? That is, Jesus says, "He comes in My name." Since He has all power, the power of Jesus that is released through us, since He makes Jesus real to us, is there anybody here who would dare to say that the Holy Spirit is not your best friend? But, the problem is many of us do not know Him personally and many of us mistreat the Holy Spirit.

And, I want to mention three ways that you dare not mistreat your best friend. Okay? Now, all of this is by way of introduction just to bring you to these three things that I just pray God that you will not do. And, each of them comes from the Word of God.

I. Don't Fail to Let Him in Your Life

Now, the first way that you may mistreat your best friend is not to let Him in your life at all. Acts chapter 7 and verse 51, Stephen was preaching to the unsaved, and this is the indictment that he gives about them. Acts chapter 7 verse 51: "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always...*" Now, listen to this phrase, "*...resist the Holy Ghost...*" (Acts 7:51).

I beg you, I plead with you, with all of the strength, the emotion, the unction, and the empowerment of my heart and soul today, if you're an unsaved man, do not, do not, do not resist the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is here today to bring you to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit of God wants to speak to you, how does He speak? He speaks through song, He speaks through Scripture, He speaks through sermons, He speaks through servants, He speaks through situations, He speaks through sorrows, He speaks and He speaks and He speaks.

The Holy Spirit of God is working in this place. I know that He is here today, but you may resist Him. There is a certain kind of theology that speaks irresistible grace. They say that when God speaks, no man can resist. And, when God calls, then you will answer and be saved. Oh no, my dear friend, you can resist the Holy Spirit. You can resist the Holy Spirit. And, Stephen, that spirit filled deacon who was preaching, looked at those unsaved people and said, "You always resist the Holy Spirit of God." And, my dear friend, what happens when you resist and resist the Holy Spirit? I'll tell you what happens, you may come to a place where your resistance becomes blasphemy. Where you commit the sin that can never ever be forgiven. Put this scripture down, Matthew chapter 12 verses 31 and 32. The Lord Jesus Christ is warning the resisters of his day, and he says, "*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him...*" Jesus said, you can blaspheme Me and be forgiven, "*but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the*

world to come” (Matthew 12:31–32).

There is a sin that you can commit while you’re still alive that will never, never, never, never ever be forgiven. A poet put it this way, “There’s a time I know not when, there is a place I know not where which marks the destiny of men, to Heaven or despair, there is a line by us not seen which crosses every path, the hidden boundary between God’s mercy and God’s wrath.” And, my dear friend, if you cross that line, if you cross that deadline, you’ll be just as lost and destined for Hell as if you were already there. That is if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

Now, it’s very interesting, Jesus said you can speak a word against the Son of Man and it’ll be forgiven. Who is the Son of Man? Jesus. Jesus said, “You can blaspheme Me and you’ll be forgiven.” You may be forgiven, it’s possible to be forgiven, that is. But, if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit you can’t be forgiven. Now, that’s an interesting question. Is the Holy Spirit greater than Jesus? Is the Holy Spirit more important than Jesus? No not at all. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal. Why did Jesus give this warning about the Holy Spirit? I’ll tell you why, my dear friend, it is because of the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of Jesus is a ministry of redemption. But, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a ministry of revelation. There’s the difference. You see, Jesus died to redeem us, but many people are ignorant of that. I mean, when Jesus Christ was on the cross He prayed for those who were nailing Him up to that cross. And, He said, “...*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Right? They don’t know what they are doing. When a man blasphemes the Holy Spirit He knows what He’s doing. You see, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a ministry of revelation. I mean, when the Holy Spirit of God is speaking to you, when the Holy Spirit of God is opening your heart, when the Holy Spirit of God is tugging at you, when the Holy Spirit of God is speaking to you, and you say, “No,” that’s not ignorance. That, my friend, is rebellion. And, Jesus cannot pray, Father forgive him, he doesn’t know what he’s doing. Oh, my dear friend, how terrible, how awful it is to resist the Holy Spirit cause the Bible says in Genesis chapter 6, “*And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man...*” Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3 (Genesis 6:3).

And, so my dear friend, I pray, I beg you, and I plead with you, do not resist the Holy Spirit. He’s your best friend. Why fight your best friend? But, you can resist Him. You can bring yourself to a place where He no longer speaks to you.

I read a story of a young man who went away to the big city, he left the farm, and he went away to the big city to work. He came from a godly Christian home. His mother and dad loved God and walked with God and they had their son with them every Lord’s day in the house of God. They were a little fearful about sending him away to the big city, but they said, “Son, when you go away to work—and we expect you to go—you’re

growing up. Son when you go, make us this promise, a solemn promise. Son every Lord's Day, every Lord's Day, unless you're ill, be in the house of God. Be in the house of God." And, that young man said, "Mother I solemnly promise. I'll go to church. I'll be in the house of God every Lord's day."

He got off there to the big city and was faithful for a while. And, he met some friends and they said to him one day, "It's Sunday let's rent some horses and go horseback riding." He said, "I can't do that. I'm going to church this morning." They said, "Listen we work all week, this is the only day. If we don't go today, we can't go, it won't hurt you." And, they prevailed upon him and early in the morning he with these other boys, riding over the hills, having a wonderful time.

It was a beautiful day, and they rode for quite a while. It was about eleven o'clock and as they were horseback riding, they rode past a little village and in that little village at eleven there was a country church and the people were gathering for worship and the church bell began to ring in that steeple. And, as he heard that church bell ring it reminded him so much of his little country church that he'd come from and he knew that his mamma and his daddy were sitting in the pew there, if it were a normal Sunday morning. And, they had every confidence that he was sitting there too because he'd made a solemn promise.

How his conscience stabbed him, but he continued to ride. And, after a while he just stopped his horse and they said, "What's wrong?" He said, "I'm going back." They said, "Why are you going back?" He said, "Did you hear those church bells?" They said, "Yes we heard them." He reminded them of the solemn promise that he'd made to his mother and he said, "When I heard those church bells, they spoke to my heart and my conscience. And, the farther we ride, the dimmer the bells become. I can hardly hear them now. I'm going back. I'm not going to ride any farther. I'm not going to keep riding until I can no longer hear the bells."

I thought of that. And, I thought, that's how some of you have done the Holy Spirit. I mean, when you've first heard the gospel preached, how the Holy Spirit of God spoke to your heart and you just ride on. Just ride on. And, some of you today, can barely hear the bells ringing. I beg you, I beg you in the name of Jesus do not resist the Holy Spirit. Don't do it. Resist not His in coming.

II. Don't Grieve His Indwelling

The second thing I don't want you to do is grieve not His indwelling. If you have invited Him in, and if the Holy Spirit of God has come into you, then do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Turn with me the Ephesians chapter 4 for just a moment and look at another command concerning God's Holy Spirit. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 30. Look at this command concerning your best friend. *"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby*

ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

Now, pay close attention, I want you to think with me right now. Those like the Jehovah’s witnesses, who do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person, there’s no way on earth they can explain a verse like this one. You cannot grieve a thing. You cannot grieve an influence. You cannot grieve a force. You can only grieve a person, a person. And, I’m going to tell you something else. The only kind of person that you can grieve is someone who loves you. Your lawn mower may vex you. Your wayward son will grieve you. Isn’t that right? You see, you can only grieve somebody who loves you. It is the Holy Spirit of God who loves you so. And, the Bible says, “Don’t grieve Him.” And, how we grieve the Holy Spirit and what grieves Him.

Well, look if you will, just back up. Verse 30 is a conclusion of a number of verses. Look in verse 24. He says, “*...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Ephesians 4:24). Now, if He is the Holy Spirit, what grieves Him is anything that is unholy. Anything that is not true holiness. And, so if there is anything unholy in your life, I can tell you right now it grieves your best friend, for example unholy character. Look if you will in verse 25 of this same chapter. Ephesians 4 verse 25: “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Ephesians 4:25–28).

Dishonesty may grieve the Holy Spirit, an unholy character. Putting away lying. Now, if there’s any dishonesty in your heart today, that grieves the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the truth, and Satan is a liar. Now, put away lying. Is there any act of dishonesty in your life, is there anything? Any relationship? Any pretense? Any thievery? That grieves the Holy Spirit, unholy character. You see, a man’s character is told by his relationship to truth.

Unholy conduct grieves the Holy Spirit. Anger can grieve the Holy Spirit. Uncontrolled anger, according to this passage of scripture. You know, you can tell the character of a man by what makes him mad. Do you know what makes some men mad? I’ll tell you what’ll make them spitting mad, when they’ll do something very childish. They’ll miss a putt, and throw a golf club out in the lake or wrap it around a tree. I mean, they’ll get that angry over missing a putt. And, the same man will go the clubhouse and drink liquor and read pornography. The thing that doesn’t make him angry, but amuses him is what he ought to get angry at.

Listen friend, you can tell a man’s character by what makes him angry. Hey, the Bible doesn’t say not to be angry. It says to be angry and sin not. And, the only way to be angry and sin not is to be angry at sin. Not angry with the sinner, but angry at the things that hurt the sinner and hurt mankind. Jesus was moved with anger when He saw

people mistreated. But, dear friend, uncontrolled, unrighteous anger grieves the Holy Spirit. Unholy character, unholy conduct, and unholy conversation. Look, if you will in this same chapter, here.

Oh how we mistreat our best friend. Verse 29, *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (Ephesians 4:29). Now, the word here “corrupt,” doesn’t refer to that which is dirty necessarily, as nasty as you want to be. That isn’t what he’s talking about, although certainly that would grieve the Holy Spirit. The word here “corrupt” in this place simply means, “rotten.” It means a word that was used for rotten fruit. Or putrid food, that which could not be consumed, or that which would not build a person up if he ate it or consumed it.

Every word that you say either tears down or builds up. And, what he is saying is, “Don’t let any rotten communication or corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.” It just grieves the Holy Spirit. So many of us wound our best friend by unholy character, unholy conduct, and unholy conversation.

Let me show you something that I suppose grieves the Holy Spirit more than anything else. Look down in verse 31. We’re still talking about unholy conversation. *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:31–32).

Oh my dear friend, I want you to see what a tongue not controlled by the Holy Spirit can do. Look at this. It’s one of the most terrifying scriptures in all of the Bible. Look at the word “bitterness.” You see that word “bitterness?” The word “bitterness” refers to somebody who has been wounded or somebody who has a wrong done to them. It may be real, or it may be an imagined wrong. Perception is the cruelest form of reality and they may perceive that they’ve been wronged. Rather than carrying that wrong to Jesus, rather than having a spirit of forgiveness toward the person who wrongs them, they take that in and it becomes a root of bitterness.

Now, look at the next word, let all bitterness and wrath. The word “wrath” has the idea of heat. It’s the idea of doing a slow burn, that person who is bitter becomes a wrathful person. He begins to burn on the inside and there are a lot of folks today who are just filled with wrath, they do the slow burn.

And, now look at the word “anger.” Do you see this? First bitterness, a perceived hurt that is taken internalized. Then wrath, it becomes a burning smoldering heat on the inside and anger. Now, what happens? Have you ever seen somebody just explode? I mean, you wonder what on earth made them act that way? They react to something that’s so small and suddenly it’s just terrible. It’s just an explosion. Well, what has happened is that wrath has been like smoldering rags in the closet, somebody just

opens the closet door, and when oxygen hits those smoldering rags, it just burst aflame.

Now, anger is wrath exposed. Anger is speaks of that which is outward and a person then goes into a rage. Anger. Now, watch. Let me show you what the devil does. And, then evil speaking, when you get angry, then you lose control. You begin to say things that you never meant to say. This is called evil speaking. You begin to say to your wife things that you don't mean, like "I hate you," or "it was a mistake when I married you." You begin to say to your children, "You always break my heart," "You will never amount to anything," or "You're the worst child I've ever seen." And, you begin to say things to even your boss that you'll surely regret later on. But, you say these things because your tongue is out of control. This is called anger.

Now, watch happens then. And, then it says "malice." Let anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. Evil speaking now becomes malice. And, malice is a desire to hurt somebody. This is where we want to hurt them economically, we want to hurt them physically, or we want to hurt them verbally. It's a terrible thing. It's a terrible thing and when we begin to act this way. How we grieve the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is so sensitive. He's so holy. Anything impure, grieves the Holy Spirit, unholy character, unholy conduct, unholy conversation. The Holy Spirit is your best friend and I can tell you, my dear friend, if there is in you any unconfessed and unrepented of sin your best friend is grieved. You have hurt the Holy Spirit.

III. Don't Quench His Outgoing

Now, there's a third thing that I just pray that you won't do. Number one I pray that you'll not resist His incoming. Number two, I pray that you'll not grieve His indwelling. And, number three I pray that you will not, my dear friend, quench His outgoing.

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 19: "*Quench not the Spirit*" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Resist not, grieve not, quench not. Now, don't resist His incoming. Don't grieve His indwelling. Don't quench His outgoing. You see, the Holy Spirit is in me. He lives in me. Why does He live in me? He lives in me to minister through me. He wants to bless you through me. He wants to start a fire burning in me that'll reach out a bless you. He wants there to be a stream of living water flowing out of me that will slake your thirst. And, He wants you to be a blessing to me. And, He wants us to be a blessing to one another and to this lost world.

My God what would happen if all of us would let the Holy Spirit of God do through us what He wants to do? Oh, it's incredible. When the Holy Spirit of God says, "Witness." You'd witness. When the Holy Spirit of God says, "Pray." That you would pray. When the Holy Spirit of God would say, "Give." That you would give. When the Holy Spirit of God would say, "Go." That you would go. And, then the Holy Spirit of God would say,

“Stay.” That you would stay.

Now, my dear friend the Bible uses the word “quench” with the idea of putting out a little flame. May I tell you this about your best friend, He is so gentle? He is so gentle. He is described in the Bible as “...*a still small voice*” (1 Kings 19:12). He is described in the Bible as “*a dove*” (Matthew 3:16). Have you ever seen how easily a dove is just frightened away? The Holy Spirit is not belligerent. Listen, the Holy Spirit in you will not force you to do anything. Sometimes somebody says, “Well, I just feel a compulsion to do so and so. I know it’s the Holy Spirit.” No. It may be the devil. Or it may be your psychosis or your neurosis. People with compulsions are not generally people who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

You see, listen let me tell you what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit does not drive, but He leads. The Holy Spirit does not shout, He whispers. He does not shove, and He does not shout. The Holy Spirit whispers and He leads and, friend, you have to be listening. And, the reason that many of us are floundering around, saying, “I don’t know what I’m supposed to do,” is that—I’ll tell you why—you are grieving the Holy Spirit and quenching the Holy Spirit. When you stop grieving Him and stop quenching Him you are going to be amazed how much power and guidance there is in your life. When you stop grieving Him, and stop quenching Him. Listen, He will speak to you is you will listen. You’re just not tuned into Him. We hear what we want to hear.

I read years and years ago about two men who were walking down a street of New York City and suddenly a man stopped and he said, “Listen, did you hear that?” The man who stopped his friend was a naturalist so he said, “Did you hear what?” He said, “Did you hear that cricket?” He said, “There’s a cricket chirping in New York City.” He said, “You’re crazy.” He said, “No, come back and listen.” They went back, listened, and there was the sound of a cricket there on the streets of New York City. And, the man said, “That is incredible. How in all of this horn blowing and all of this noise and all of this chatter and all of this clamor, how did you hear that cricket?” “Well,” he said, “I’m a farm boy. And, I love nature and I’m just tuned to those kinds of things. People hear what they’re tuned to. Let me show you something.” And, the man reached into his pocket and took out some change and dropped it on the sidewalk. And, people all around stopped, at the sound of coins on concrete. It’s just the sound that got their attention. All other kinds of sounds were going on and none of them stopped but the sound of silver on concrete.

Conclusion

Friend, I can tell you time after time when the Holy Spirit of God has spoken to me and I have obeyed the Holy Spirit of God and it’s been incredible. And, I can tell you time after time when the Holy Spirit of God spoke to me and I did not obey and I just put the thing

in override, and later on I regretted it. I mean, down to the core of my being. Don't quench the Holy Spirit. Be swift my soul to answer Him. Be jubilant my feet. He wants to lead you, He leadeth me. Oh blessed thought, oh words with Heavenly comfort fraught. Whatever I do, wherever I be, still God by His hand, by His spirit, leadeth me. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. May I tell you again, that the Holy Spirit of God is here to make Jesus Christ real to you? If you're not saved, don't resist His incoming. If you are saved, don't grieve His indwelling and do not quench His outgoing. Father God seal the message to our hearts, in Jesus name, amen.

The Holy Spirit: Your Best Friend

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 21, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 14:15–17, 26

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

JOHN 14:26

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find John chapter 14? And while you’re finding it, let me tell you this: the best friend that you have on this earth is the Holy Spirit. You say, well, I thought Jesus was my best friend. That’s exactly right. The best friend that you have on this earth is the Holy Spirit, who is Christ in the Christian. Now, we don’t worship three gods. We worship one God who has manifested Himself to us in three persons. We need to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person. Now, don’t call me with

an impersonal pronoun. Don't say, well, it preached tonight. He preached tonight. Of course, that remains to be seen, but he was standing up there behind the pulpit, and the Holy Spirit is a person. My desire in the message tonight is to help you to know the Holy Spirit, to love the Holy Spirit, to trust the Holy Spirit, to believe the Holy Spirit, who lives in your heart. I want you not to know about Him, but I want you to become personally acquainted with Him, and I want you to give Him the royal place that He deserves in your heart.

Now, look, if you will, in John 14, beginning in verse 15. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him—now, watch this—for he dwelleth with you,—who was dwelling with them right there? Jesus—and shall be in you." Well, is it Jesus or the Holy Spirit who's going to be in you? Well, the one who is dwelling with them was the one who would be in them. Who is that? Jesus. You see, the Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian. Then go to verse 26, and look at this: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Now, God the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, another Comforter, to take the place of Jesus on this earth, and, as a matter of fact, He comes in Jesus' name, according to verse 26, and the Holy Spirit is to be, therefore, to those disciples after Jesus ascended, and to be to us, as Jesus was to them when He was in the flesh here on this earth. Now, Jesus walked with them, He talked with them, He fellowshiped with them, He guided them, He instructed them, and He protected them; and now He says, I'm going away, but I'm sending another to take my place, to walk with you, to talk with you, to guide you, to instruct you, to befriend you, to be with you; and, when He says, I send you another Comforter, as you know or could know—perhaps know—that there are two different words for another in the Greek language, another may be another of a different kind. You've had a bicycle for transportation, and you get a horse—that's another kind; but if you get another bicycle exactly like you had the first, you'd have another of the same kind. Now, Jesus uses the word for another here to mean another of the same kind. I am sending someone like me to take my place. And so, the Holy Spirit is to be to us in this dispensation what Jesus in the flesh was to the disciples when He was here, and He took Jesus' place on earth. Now, we are to treat Him, therefore, as we would treat Jesus if Jesus were here in the flesh, and certainly I know how you would honor and reverence the Lord Jesus, and so don't mistreat your best friend.

I. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Now, I want to talk to you a little bit, before I talk to you about three tragic sins against the Holy Spirit; I just want to remind you one more time of who the Holy Spirit is, and what the Holy Spirit does.

First of all, what does He do to help us to get saved? How did we get saved?

A. The Holy Spirit Convicts Us of Sin

Well, it was the Holy Spirit that convicted us of sin. Now, go to John chapter 16, and look in verses 7 to 9—John chapter 16 and verses 7 to 9. Jesus said, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” Had you rather be here when Jesus was here on in the flesh, or had you rather be on earth when Jesus has gone to heaven? Be careful, because Jesus said it is better for you that I’m in heaven and the Holy Spirit here. That’s what the word expedient means. Don’t wish for the good old days, friend; these are the good old days. “It is expedient for you that I go away.” He said, “if I don’t go, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you,—now, watch it—and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me.”

Now, friend, without the convicting power of the Holy Spirit you would never have seen your need of the Savior. It was the Holy Spirit of God that convicted you of sin. You see, without the Holy Spirit no person would be willing to give up his sin and really turn his back on this world in genuine repentance until the Holy Spirit of God convicts him of the hurtfulness, the hellishness of sin, till the Holy Spirit convicts him that he is under the curse of God, that he is doomed and bound for hell. I heard a man say a very silly thing. He was talking about church growth. He said, “I never preach on sin.” He said, “You don’t need to tell people they’re sinners; they already know it.” No, they don’t. Oh, they think they have done wrong, they think they’ve been naughty, but they don’t know that they’re sinners. Only the Holy Spirit of God can convict a man of sin. And friend, there is a difference between an admission of wrongdoing and a conviction of sin. If you’ve ever had that conviction of sin, you know what it is, and I’ll tell you who did it. It was not some preacher. It was the Holy Spirit of God who put His finger on your heart.

B. The Holy Spirit Draws Us to Jesus

Now, not only does the Holy Spirit of God convict lost sinners of their sin, but it is the Holy Spirit of God that draws those sinners to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, in this same book of John, in chapter 6 and verse 44, “No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” Do you think it was your idea to come to Him? Oh no. You were running from Him. If He had not run you down, you never would have

been saved. The Bible says there's none that seeketh after God. There's others today in the realm of church growth who talk about seeker-sensitive services. We've just got to be sensitive to all these people who are seeking the Lord. The truth of the matter is none of them are seeking the Lord. He is seeking them. If you want to be sensitive to somebody, you'd better be sensitive to the one whose seeking the sinner, who is the Holy Spirit of God; and rather than making the sinners comfortable, we'd better make the Holy Spirit comfortable, because I am dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God to take what I say and convict people, so rather than trying to get the approval of those who hear me, I'd better get the approval of the one who sent me, and it is my job to fill the pulpit, not to fill the pew. It is the Holy Spirit's job, through the minister. Now, that doesn't mean that we are to be rude to people; it doesn't mean that we're to be inhospitable, and so forth, but I want you to understand really the Bible says: "There is none that seeketh after God, no not one." We never would have come had He not caught us and brought us and taught us. Is that not true? That, "There is none that seeketh after God, no not one." "No man can come unto me, Jesus said, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him..." Thank God for the dear Holy Spirit who convicted us of sin and drew us to Christ.

C. The Holy Spirit Opens Our Understanding to Understand the Gospel

Now, here's something else the Holy Spirit of God did when you got saved. He opened your understanding so that you could understand the gospel. I was reading there in the book of Acts where there was a woman named Lydia that the apostle Paul found and shared the gospel of Christ with her. Well, what brought her to an understanding of the gospel? Well, put this verse down in your margin—Acts chapter 16 and verse 14: "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us—now, watch this—whose heart the Lord opened..." That's the reason before I preach I get on my knees and pray, "Lord, You have to open their hearts." Wasn't it beautiful this morning to see so many people coming to Jesus? Wasn't that a blessing? Both services. Who did that? Was it the choir? Was it the preacher? Was it the handshake of the ushers? No. The Holy Spirit of God just opened the hearts of people so that they can understand the gospel. You see, a man without the Holy Spirit, he can't understand spiritual things. You might as well expect your dog to understand opera. Listen to the Scripture—1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them..." They are spiritual discerned. It is the Holy Spirit of God that convicted you of sin. It is the Holy Spirit of God that drew you to Jesus Christ. It was the Holy Spirit of God that opened your heart and gave you understanding. And so, we are so dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God in evangelism.

And then, after people get saved, the ministry of the Holy Spirit does not cease. What does the Holy Spirit do when a person is convicted of sin, drawn to Christ, and had his heart opened, and receives Christ?

D. The Holy Spirit Seals Us into the Body of Christ

Then the Holy Spirit moves in with the ministry to those who are saved, and the very first thing He does when you give your heart to Jesus, He seals you into the body of Christ. Listen to this scripture—Ephesians 1, verses 13 and 14—the Bible says, concerning Him, “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 the Holy Spirit of promise.” The Bible says over in the book of Esther, “...the king’s seal no man can break.” He says, “That’s mine.” The seal was a stamp of ownership and a finished transaction. Brother, sister, when you get saved, you are signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit of God. I love this verse—2 Timothy 2, verse 19:

“Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his...” He puts a mark on us. We belong to Him.

E. The Holy Spirit Indwells Our Bodies

So, not only does the Holy Spirit of God, after we get saved, seal us into the body of Christ, but then He comes to indwell our bodies. He comes to live in us. First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20: “What? Know ye not...” Paul is almost amazed that they didn’t know this. “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which ye have in God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” You are the temple of the Holy Spirit of God.

You know, sometimes people think, well, this is the sanctuary. They say now the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silent. This is the sanitary. This is not the sanctuary—this is the sheep shed. Now, listen. We ought not to misplace this, or misuse this, because it’s dedicated to God, but sometimes people have an idea that God now dwells in temples made with hands, and so they come into a holy place. Friend, I want to tell you, when you get saved every place is a holy place, and every day is a holy day. And you want to know where the temple is? You are the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. You know, there are people who would use language out there they wouldn’t use in here. Isn’t that ridiculous? Some of you go outside and burn a little incense. But you say, “I wouldn’t do that in there; no, no, no, no, that’s God’s house.” No, you’re God’s house. It’s far better to defile this, if you had to, than to defile this. What? Don’t you know, haven’t you heard, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which you have of God? My dear friend, you are not your own. You’ve been bought with a price. You’re to glorify God in your body.

F. The Holy Spirit Comforts Us in Sorrow

So what does the Holy Spirit of God do after you get saved? He seals you into the body of Christ. Then He indwells you, and He comes to live in you, and so you're under obligation by the blood of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit to live for God. And then He carries you through life, and when you have a heartache, a tear, a sorrow, He gives you comfort that no one else can give you. Look again in John 14, verses 16 and 17—Jesus said, “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever”—the Greek word is *paraclete*, but it means somebody who is standing alongside of you to help you, to comfort you—“even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you.” That's me Jesus is speaking of. I mean, Jesus is saying, I'm speaking of Myself and shall be in you. I'll be in you through the Holy Spirit. Have you ever felt that comfort? Friend, you know it is absolutely, totally real. You know I've been to the graveside so many times, I've been in the hospital room so many times, I've been in situations where peoples' lives have been crushed, and I've seen the Holy Spirit of God do what no psychologist, no counselor, no good friend can do: give supernatural comfort.

G. The Holy Spirit Guides Us and Directs Us

Then, what else does the Holy Spirit of God do when you get saved? Not only does He seal you, not only does He indwell you, not only does He comfort you; but the Holy Spirit of God guides you and directs you. You're not to be fumbling around like a ship without a mast, without a sail, without a compass, and without a rudder on a dark and stormy night. No! He is to guide you. John 14, verse 26—look at it: “But the Comforter—which is the Holy Ghost—whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.” And again, John 16, verse 13: “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.” So you don't have to be living in darkness, stumbling in darkness. You can be walking in the light as the Holy Spirit of God opens your understanding, guides you, teaches you, instructs you, and leads you through this world.

H. The Holy Spirit Empowers Us for Service

And then, not only that, but the Holy Spirit of God is going to empower you for service. People say, Well, I just serve God in my poor little old weak way.” Well, quit it! Stop. He doesn't want you to serve Him in your poor little old weak way. He wants you to serve Him in His power. Acts 1:8: “Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me.” Now, thank God for the power of the Holy

Spirit of God that energizes us to do so many things.

I. The Holy Spirit Helps Us to Pray

What does the Holy Spirit of God do? He helps us to pray. We talked about that this morning—praying in the Spirit. He is the Spirit of prayer and intercession: "...and we know not what we should pray for as ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us." And, by the way, that particular verse in the King James says, the Spirit itself. Friend, that is just simply an idiosyncrasy of the Greek language when they're trying to make the words line up together and match, but any translator will tell you that can be, "The Spirit Himself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Now, I've just tried to give you just a little synopsis of the ministry of the dear, precious Holy Spirit of God, who is the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth, and in our hearts, before we are saved, and after we're saved. Thank God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Amen? Oh, thank goodness for the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

II. Tragic Sins Against the Holy Spirit

Now, having said that, I want to mention three tragic sins against the Holy Spirit. And, when we think of who this wonderful person is, and all that He does for us, you can understand why these are tragic sins.

A. The Holy Spirit May Be Stubbornly Resisted

Tragic sin number one: the Holy Spirit may be stubbornly resisted—the Holy Spirit may be stubbornly resisted. You might want to turn to Acts chapter 7 and verse 51. Stephen is preaching, and the people are angry at Stephen, because he's preaching the Word of God without fear or favor, and they are later going to kill him. He is going to be a martyr for the cause of Christ. But here's what he says to these people: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did..." Now, he said they were stiff-necked, they were hard-hearted, their ears were stopped up, and he said, you resist the Holy Spirit.

Now, there are some people who say the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted. There's a form of theology that speaks of something called irresistible grace. They say there is no way that you can resist God. If God is going to save you, He's going to save you, and there's nothing you can do about it, and some people are just predestined, foreordained to be saved, and it is settled, and it is impossible for anybody to resist this grace, and so they call that irresistible grace. Well, I'd like to know what they do with this verse. No, He can be resisted, and God will allow Him to be resisted, because, you see, God will not force you to love Him or follow Him, because forced love is a contradiction in terms. Now, the Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin—we've already said that. And the Holy Spirit of God may convict. He convicts through song; He convicts through sermon; He

convicts through Scripture; He convicts through sermons. The Holy Spirit of God convicts. Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit. When they resisted his message, they resisted the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, you could not come to Jesus unless the Holy Spirit of God drew you to Him, but you can resist Him, and if you continue to resist Him, you may cross God's deadline. You may commit a sin that is an unpardonable sin. Take your Bible and turn to Matthew chapter 12 for a moment. Just turn to it. I want you to see this, because this is one of the most terrifying passages of Scripture in all of the Bible. Matthew chapter 12, and beginning in verse 31—Jesus said, "Wherefore, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." Jesus is saying there's one sin that can't be forgiven, and that is to blaspheme the Holy Ghost. The word blaspheme means to speak reproachfully and hurtfully against. "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man..."—who is the Son of man? Jesus. That was His favorite term for Himself: Son of man—"...whosoever speaketh against the Son of man—that is, Jesus—it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him—now, watch it—neither in this world, neither in the world to come." There is a sin that can never, never, never, never, ever be forgiven, and that is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

Now, He says, you can blaspheme Me and be forgiven—Jesus is speaking—but you can't blaspheme the Holy Spirit and be forgiven. What is the difference? Is the Holy Spirit superior to Jesus? Of course not! God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal, but there's a difference in ministry. The ministry of Jesus is the ministry of redemption. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is the ministry of revelation. It is the Holy Spirit of God that turns the light on. You see, a person can blaspheme Jesus. A person might say, in ignorance, "I don't believe He's the Son of God. I believe He was the illegitimate child of a German soldier. I just believe that He's a false prophet. I believe this; I believe that." And that person, in ignorance, can do that, and Jesus can pray, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do," but a person who sins against the Holy Spirit sins against light. You see, the Holy Spirit is the one who opens his heart and convicts him of sin, and draws him to Christ, and says, this is who Jesus is; and he knows it, but with his eyes wide open, out of stubbornness, he resists the Holy Spirit, just like those people who stoned Stephen.

What had happened is this: that Jesus had opened the eyes of a blind man and cast the devils out of him, and so forth, and the Pharisees, in whose heart the milk of human kindness had curdled, they said, oh, yes, they couldn't deny He'd done a miracle, so they tried to explain it away, and they said, sure, He's casting out devils, but how does He do it? He does it by the prince of devils, by Beelzebub, the lord of the flies, the

prince of filth, the worst kind of description of a person. That was the Phoenician god of filth that the Phoenicians worshiped. Maggots—that's what they worshiped. They believed that, life can out of carrion, and they would see some putrefaction on the ground, and little white worms would come out of it. There would be maggots where the flies had put their microscopic eggs, and they didn't know about that. All they saw was out of rottenness and out of filth there came life, so they said, oh, that's our god. Our god is Beelzebub. Buzzebabub. It was a fly. Buzzbe babub. That's really why, that's how they got their name Buzzebub—Buzzebub. They worshiped the god of filth, and they said, yes, we know how you are doing this. You have hooked up with Satan. They knew better. Jesus rebuked their inconsistency. It was a sin against light. It was a sin against love. It was a sin against logic. They knew better. They knew better. But with their eyes wide open, they resisted the Holy Spirit of God. They were playing with fire.

Now, a person out of ignorance may blaspheme Jesus, but it was so obvious here that Jesus was not in collusion with the devil—He was in collision with the devil. And Jesus warned them, the same sin that these people who stoned Stephen committed. He said, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit..." There comes a time when you can hear—teenager, you can hear the Word of God, and teenagers can commit this unpardonable sin. You can sit there and pass notes and giggle and resist what God is saying, and make up reasons and excuses for not getting right with God, and your heart will get harder and harder, and Jesus said, you can't come except I draw you. Don't get the idea that one day you can just whistle, and say, "God, come save me." Oh, no. I mean, if the Holy Spirit of God ceases to strive, then where are you? In Genesis 6:3, God says, "My Spirit will not always strive with a man." There comes a time when the Holy Spirit of God can be so refused, so insulted, so despised that He crosses the deadline. There's a time, I know not when. There's a place, I know not where, which marks the destiny of men, to heaven or despair. There's a line by us not seen which crosses every path—'tis the hidden boundary between God's mercy and God's wrath. The Holy Spirit of God can be resisted. Turn to Proverbs chapter 1 for a moment. Let me show you something. Just take your Bibles and turn—Psalms, Proverbs. Let me hear the pages. All right, Proverbs chapter 1. Let me show you something. We've talking about resisting the Holy Spirit of God. Look, if you will, in verse 23. Here's the Lord speaking to a lost sinner. He may be speaking to somebody here tonight. He may be speaking to somebody listening through radio. Listen to it now. Proverbs chapter 1, verse 23: "Turn you at my reproof; behold,—listen—I will pour out my Spirit upon you..."—this is the Holy Spirit now—"...I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." But now, notice in verse 24: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."

1. The Sinner's Decision

Here's the decision of the sinner. God stretches out His hand, God calls, God pours out His Spirit, and you say no—no. That's your decision. All right. That's the decision of the sinner. He foolishly fights the one who loves him so.

2. The Sinner's Desolation

Now, after the decision of the sinner, there comes the desolation of the sinner. Look, if you will now, in verse 26, and see what happens: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation..." What is desolation? When you're left alone—you're desolate—you're left alone. There comes first a hardened decision, and then a hopeless desolation. The Lord just doesn't speak anymore. And the Bible says God says He will laugh. This is not the laughter of humor; it's the laughter of irony. God's hand is no longer stretching out. God's voice is no longer calling. The sinner is desolate. You'll find the same thing in the book of Hosea, where God says, in Hosea chapter 4 and verse 17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." Do you know what it means, join to his idols? He's married to his idols. He's married to his idols. He has made up his mind. He may be saying to somebody in this auditorium tonight he's married to his liquor—let him alone; he's married to his adultery—let him alone; he's married to his pleasure—let him alone; he's married to his profanity—let him alone.

3. The Sinner's Destruction

First of all, there's the sinner's decision, then there's the sinner's desolation, and then there's the sinner's destruction. Look, if you will now again, in the last part of verse 27 and verse 28. Look at it: "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;—that's a tornado—when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Like a tornado dropping out of the sky, irresistible, and destruction and devastation comes, the judgment of God, and the lost sinner is swept away, carried away to perdition. Watch it now.

4. The Sinner's Desperation

The sinner's decision, the sinner's desolation, the sinner's destruction, and then, the sinner's desperation. Notice now, beginning in verse 28: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." They will come to the final judgment, and they will say, "O God, have mercy." If you want mercy, you may have it; if you want forgiveness, you may have it—but you'll have it in this life. You cannot spit in the face of God, you cannot insult the Holy Spirit of God, you cannot be stiff-necked, hard-hearted, and heavy eared, and refuse the entreating of the dear Holy Spirit of God who convicts you of sin, who draws you to Christ, who opens your understanding,

hurtfully, despitefully say no. What a tragic sin against the Holy Spirit to stubbornly resist!

Years ago I heard the story of a young man who was leaving the farm and going off to the big city to go to work. He grew up in a fine little country church, and he had wonderful parents. They didn't like the idea of him going away, so they were instructing him. Well, they knew he had to go, that wasn't that; but they were, you know how parents are when a child leaves, even though he's a grown man. They said, "Son, you've been raised to worship on the Lord's Day, and, as your parents, we want to ask you to solemnly promise that every Lord's Day you'll be in the house of God. That's all we ask. Just be in the house of God, son, every Lord's Day, and know we'll be in the house of God. And, when you're there in the house of God, and we're there in the house of God, when we are worshiping, son, know that we are thinking of you and praying for you, and you'll be thinking of us and praying for us. Will you promise?" He said, "Yes, Mother, yes, Dad, I promise." And he did that for a while, but he had four friends there that he met in this city, and those four friends said to him one day, "Let's go out in the country and let's go horseback riding." He said, "Well, no, I'm sorry. This is Sunday, and I promised my parents I would be in the house of God. I'm going to be in church." They said, "Oh, come on, now listen. We've been working hard. This is the only day we have, and, after all, we'll be out in nature, and we'll have a good time, and you can miss church. Come on." He said, "All right, guys, I'll go." And they saddled up, and they were riding all morning, and, as they rode, they rode past the little village. It was about 11:00 Sunday morning, and the old bell was ringing in the spire of that country church, ringing out the call to worship, and the people were coming in. And he rode past, and he looked at those people, and his heart smote him, because he knew he was supposed to be in church, but he just rode on. And as he rode on and went further away from the church, and kind of out of the village a little bit, he could hear the bells still ringing, but the sound of the bells was getting less and less in his ears. And, finally, he just reined up the horse, and said, "Guys, I'm sorry." He said, "I'm going back." He said, "The further I get away from those bells the harder they are to hear." And he said, "If I don't turn around and go back now, I'm just afraid I won't hear them anymore. I'll see you. I'm going back."

Now, friend, I want to tell you something. That's so much like the Holy Spirit of God, and if you're not careful, you're going to ride right on past where you just can't hear anymore. That would be tragic. Now, don't let the sound of those bells die out in your heart and in your mind, and don't resist the Holy Spirit. Listen to me tonight—listen to me. If you're not saved, I beg you in the name of Jesus, don't resist the Holy Spirit. Please, please, give your heart to Jesus. Don't go blindly on. Don't say no to the God who's stretching out His hand to you, the God who is calling you, the God who is

drawing you, the God who is convicting you. The Holy Spirit may be stubbornly resisted. That's one sin against the Holy Spirit.

B. The Holy Spirit May Be Sinfully Grieved

Number two: the Holy Spirit may be sinfully grieved—sinfully grieved. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4, and look with me for a moment; Ephesians chapter 4, and look in verse 30. The apostle Paul here is talking now to Christians, those who've already been saved, and did you know that Christians can sin against the Holy Spirit? Look, if you will, in verse 30—he says, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Well, what grieves the Holy Spirit? Well, sin grieves the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, beginning in verse 28, “Let him that stole steal no more but, rather, let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” You see, when you have sin in your heart, you grieve the Holy Spirit. Verse 26: “Be angry and sin not...” Don't sin. What grieves the Holy Spirit is sin in my heart, in your heart, in my life, in your life. He is the Holy Spirit. I am His temple. If I have unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my heart, He's grieved. The word grieve is a love word.

By the way, you know the Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe that the Holy Spirit is a person—did you know that? The Jehovah's Witnesses and others believe the Holy Spirit is some sort of an influence coming from God. No. You can't grieve an influence; you can only grieve a person. I'm going to tell you something else. You can only grieve a person that loves you. Your neighbor's kids will vex you; your own children will grieve you. Do you know the difference? You see, that's a love word—that's a love word. You see, an influence, a thing, cannot feel.

I was passing a school a while back, and I saw a car whose fender had been dented in, the back fender it had just been creamed, and a person with some sort of white paint had gone out there and written on that fender O-U-C-H—ouch—on that fender. But I just had to laugh, because I knew that fender didn't feel a thing. The owner felt something, but the car didn't feel a thing, because a car's a thing. Things don't feel—people feel; and people who love feel. And did you know when I get some filthy, dirty sin in my heart and in my life—some grudge, some attitude, some dishonesty—teenagers, when you shoplift, you grieve the Spirit of God. When you disobey your parents, you grieve the Holy Spirit of God. You break His heart. Husbands and wives, when you go to bed back to back rather than in each other's arms, fighting and fussing and fuming, you let the sun go down upon your wrath, you grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Do you

want to grieve the one who's done so much for you? Do you want to break his heart?

C. The Holy Spirit May Be Shamefully Quenched

The Holy Spirit can be stubbornly resisted, He can be sinfully grieved, and here's the third thing. The Holy Spirit can be shamefully quenched—shamefully quenched. Let me give you another command in the Bible concerning the Holy Spirit—1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 19: “Quench not the Spirit”—“Quench not the Spirit.” The idea is that the Holy Spirit is a burning flame in your heart. Don't smother that flame. Don't quench that fire that's there to make the Lord Jesus Christ real to you. Now, this flame is a gentle flame that can be snuffed out. You see, the Holy Spirit is there to lead you, to comfort you, to guide you, to instruct you, and He is so sensitive. He can be easily quenched. Did you know the difference between the spirit of this world and the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit? The devil shoves—the Holy Spirit guides. He speaks in a still, small voice. He never shouts, and He never shoves, and you know why? Because He's so gentle. He's like a dove, easily frightened, easily driven away. And not that He's afraid of you, but the emblem is of a dove and of a flame. That dove sort of flies away, that flame is put out—that still, small voice. Do you know that's the reason, folks, that you need a quiet time: to listen. He's not going to shout. If you feel something between your shoulder blades just shoving you, that's not the Holy Spirit.

I've counseled with people. They've come, and they've come there. They are compulsive people. Have you ever seen a person compulsive, a driven person? They are dangerous. They say, God has told me to do, and I say, oh, boy. No. The dear, sweet, gentle Holy Spirit of God will lead you, and He will speak to you to guide you and to teach you, but you have to listen, you have to be sensitive. Don't put out the fire. Don't quench the Holy Spirit of God. He's there to guide you, to lead you, to bless you, to help you, to love you, to comfort you. Are you listening? Are you yielded?

The Holy Spirit may be stubbornly resisted. He may be sinfully grieved. He may be shamefully quenched. Now, if you've not saved, don't resist Him—be converted. If you are saved, with sin in your heart, don't grieve Him—be clean. And if you are saved and clean, don't quench Him—be compliant. “I'm here Lord. What do you want out of me? Lead me, guide me, direct me, speak to me. Lord, speak. I'm listening.” Be jubilant my feet, our God is leading on.

Conclusion

We have a dear friend. He is the Holy Spirit. He is to us what Jesus Christ was to the disciples when they were here on earth, and we are to be to Him what the disciples were to Jesus. Amen? Amen. Bow your heads in prayer.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you just praise the Holy Spirit of God? Say, O dear Spirit of God, thank you for making Jesus real to me. Thank you for

glorifying Jesus in my heart. Thank you, Holy Spirit of God, that you drew me to Jesus. Thank you that you convicted me of sin. Thank you that you worked a miracle in my life. Thank you that you sealed me to the day of redemption. I recognize that You live in me. I turn every part of my temple over to You. I am Yours. Now, if there's anything in your heart and in your life that is grieving Him, be done with it. If He's telling you to do something, don't quench Him. Don't quench Him. If He's telling you to witness to somebody, if He's telling you to give something, if He's telling you to apologize to someone, don't say no to Him. Holy Spirit of God, thank you. I thank you, Lord, for this service, and for letting us be here. In the sweet name of Jesus. Amen.

The Secret of Obedience

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 15, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 14:15–18

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

JOHN 14:15

Outline

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Introduction

Turn with me to John chapter 14, and I want us to begin reading tonight in chapter 14, and we begin reading in verse 15. Jesus said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless”* (John 14:15–18).

Tonight, I want to speak to you about “The Secret of Obedience.” Do you have the topic in your mind: “The Secret of Obedience”? So many people are looking for the secret of the Christian life. Where is it found? Well, I believe in the passage that I have before tonight we may be right close to actually one of the most incisive statements to help us to understand how to live victoriously of any passage in all of the Bible. And so I want to call tonight our message “The Secret of Obedience.” “Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey” (John H. Sammis).

Do you want me to tell you what is wrong with the average Christian? He’s disobedient. Do you want me to tell you what is wrong with the average church? It is filled with disobedient people. Do you want me to tell you why people are not happy in their faith—they’re saved, but they’re enduring it rather than enjoying it. They’re simply

not being obedient. Now ladies and gentleman, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus us but to trust and obey.

Now obedience is something we don't hear much about. We preach so much on salvation by grace through faith, and we tell people that salvation is a gift of God that sometimes if we talk about obedience people think we're legalists. But I would have to agree with Martin Luther, who said, "We're not saved by faith and works, but we are saved by a faith that works." And James said that, "*faith without works is dead*" (James 2:26). And there are so many things that hinge on our obedience.

Now there are three things I want you to learn tonight in this passage of Scripture that we have before us.

I. Love Is the Motive for Our Obedience

First of all, I want you to notice the motive for obedience. Why do you obey the Lord? Point number one: the love of Christ—a love for Christ is the motive for obedience.

Look, if you will, in John 14, verse 15. Jesus said, "*If you love me, keep my commandments*"—"If you love me, keep my commandments." Now ladies and gentleman, there is no other motive for keeping the Word of God than love for the Lord Jesus Christ. "*If you love me, keep my commandments.*" Don't tell me that you love the Lord Jesus if you're not obeying Him. It's just foolish and empty talk.

As a matter of fact, our Lord makes it very clear and very plain that if we love Him we will keep his commandments. Look, if you will, please, in verse 21: "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him*" (John 14:21). Now Jesus tells us very clearly and very plainly therefore that the motive for commandment keeping is love for the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't keep the commandments in order to get to heaven—my way to heaven is paved by the grace of God. I keep the commandments simply because I love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn to Mark chapter 12, and let's see how we're to love the Lord Jesus—Mark chapter 12 for a moment, and I want us to look in verse 30. Here's a key passage that deals with love, and we're about loving our Lord—Mark chapter 12 and verse 30: "*Thou shalt love the Lord...*"—I want you to check up on yourselves now— "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment*" (Mark 12:30).

A. The Reality of Love

Now ladies and gentleman, here is the way that we're to love the Lord. He speaks of the reality of love. We're to love God with all of our heart. It's to be a heartfelt love. It's not to be a superficial love. You know, Jesus said, "*This people honoureth me with their lips,*

but their heart is far from me” (Mark 7:6). And I want to ask you tonight—would you nod your head if I ask you: Do you love Jesus? But I want to ask you with all of your heart, Do you truly love Jesus? Is there that reality of love? Is there that burning, passionate, emotional love for the Lord Jesus?

You know, people sing much about love, but they don’t really love the Lord. We sing sometimes on Sunday morning, “I will be true to you till death,” and we don’t even come back to church on Sunday night; we are sitting at home watching something on television, or at some ball game or something like that. No, dear friend, we are to love our Lord with reality. That is, with all of our hearts.

B. The Responsiveness of Love

And then He speaks of the responsiveness of love. Notice again, in verse 30, we’re to love the Lord our God with all of our soul—with all of our soul. What does that mean? Well, in the Bible, the soul is the self, and what our Lord is saying is that the entire self, the entire person, shall be given over to Him, no area private, no area where we say “Lord, keep out.” “Lord, everything is given to you. I love you with all of my soul; that is, with all there is of me. “ Every part, every area, is given over to the Lord.

They were looking for an evangelist for a revival crusade, and they were discussing who they might have. This was many years ago, and many ministers were saying, “We need Dwight L. Moody”—“We need Dwight L. Moody.” And one man protested and said, “Why do we need Dwight L. Moody? Does Dwight L. Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?” And they said, “No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Dwight L. Moody.” Now that’s loving the Lord. He loved the Lord with all of his soul.

C. The Reasonableness of Love

But notice this speaks not only of the reality of love, and the responsiveness of love, but it speaks of the reasonableness of love. Look at it again: “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” You see, *you can have a full heart, but a full heart is no excuse for an empty head. And a lump in your throat is no substitute for a vacuum in your cranium. You ought to love God with all of your mind.* And the reason that some of us don’t love the Lord is we don’t study, and the reason we don’t study is that we don’t love the Lord. You can’t leave your mind out of it. The Bible says we’re to “study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

D. The Resourcefulness of Love

Do you love God with all your heart tonight? Do you really? Honest, folks. That’s the reality of love. You love Him tonight with all of your soul. That’s the responsiveness of love. Everything is given to Him. Do you love Him with all your mind? That’s the

reasonableness of love. And then notice, you're to love Him with all of your strength. That's the resourcefulness of love. Everything that have, all of my energies are to be focused in love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, I want to love Him that way! I need to love Him that way. I don't love Him that way, as I ought. God, help me to love Him more, with all of my strength.

Now He's not just talking about physical strength. Surely you ought to love Him with your physical strength, but there is more than one kind of strength. There's emotional strength. There's financial strength. There are all kinds of abilities and talents that you have. And we're to love the Lord our God that way. And the Lord Jesus is telling us now that the motive for obedience is love.

Go back to John chapter 14 again and look at verse 15. Notice what our Lord is saying. *"If you love me, keep my commandments."* Now don't tell me you love the Lord Jesus if you don't keep His commandments. God is not impressed by that kind of love. Don't tell me how many verses you know. Don't tell me how often you attend church. I want to know, Are you reading what this book says, and are you obeying it? Are you loving the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, with all of your strength? If you are, then you'll be keeping the commandments of the Lord. You see, this is the motive for keeping the commandments.

Have you ever wondered why God didn't just make us where we'd just have to love Him, or we'd have to serve Him? Let me back up to why God didn't make us where we'd just have to serve Him. He could, you know. He could have created us where we couldn't do anything else but serve Him. But God couldn't get any blessing out of that. God couldn't get any enjoyment out of that.

A few years ago, people were buying pet rocks, and everybody had a pet rock. I never had one. I couldn't afford one. But a lot of people had pet rocks. And you know, there's a neat thing about a pet rock: You put it down somewhere and say, "Don't move," and it just stays right there. You never have to feed it. It never breaks your heart. It will never disappoint you. It just sits there. But you know, you don't kick out a pet rock. And really, I don't think this idea of a pet rock is going to last very long, except for the most hard-hearted people. Pet rocks are—it's just not much there. You see, God could have made us like a bunch of pet rocks, where we couldn't do anything but obey Him, and do everything He says, but God can get no response from us that way any more than you could get from a pet rock.

And so as we're talking about obedience tonight, remember that it is love that God wants. It is your love that God wants, and love is the motive of obedience.

II. The Word of God Is the Measure of Our Obedience

Now the second thing I want you to see: If the love of God is the motive of obedience,

the Word of God is the measure of your obedience. Look in John chapter 14, verse 15 again: *“If you love me, keep my commandments.”* Look in verse 21 again: *“He that hath my commandments,”*—that is, my Word—*“and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”* Look in verse 23: *“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words”* (John 14:23).

Now here the Lord is speaking of His commandments, and here the Lord is speaking of His words. Now you see, if you love Him, that’s the motivation for obeying. But what is the measure for obedience? How are you going to know what to obey? How are you going to know what to do? Well, you’ve got to know the Word of God. You can’t keep His commandments until you have them. *“He that has my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.”* And so you’ve got to get into the Word of God. That, ladies and gentleman, is the measure of your obedience: Are you bringing your life into conformity with the Word of God?

You know, Saul failed to obey the Lord, and he had a silly superficial excuse for failing to obey the Lord. And Samuel spoke to Saul. And *“Saul, it is better to obey than to sacrifice. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”* (1 Samuel 15:22–23). Did you know that if you’re not obeying God tonight, that is, if you’re not bringing your life into conformity with this Word, God classes that rebellion, that disobedience, along with stubbornness, along with idolatry, along with iniquity, along with witchcraft? You see, to fail to obey God is sheer rebellion; to fail to bring your life into accord with this book is sheer rebellion.

When I was a young father and one of my children, my first child, Stephen, was down on the floor playing as a little child of four, I asked him to pick up a piece of paper, and he failed to do it. And then I told him to pick up the piece of paper off the floor, and he refused to do it. And the next thing was that daddy was spanking this precious little boy, and mother was saying to daddy, *“Daddy, you ought not to have spanked him for not picking up a piece of paper. That seems like such a small thing.”* And I said, *“Well, I didn’t spank him really for not picking up the piece of paper. I spanked him for disobeying his daddy.”*

You see here, this is where it comes to rebellion. There may be some small little thing God is dealing with you about. You know, God may be telling you to go and apologize to someone. You say, *“Well, that’s such a small thing.”* It’s not a small thing to disobey God. God may be telling you to give a certain amount of money, and you say *“Well, that’s a small thing.”* It’s not a small thing to disobey God. God may be telling you to witness to a certain person. You say, *“Well, that’s not a big sin. I haven’t committed adultery. God says that stubbornness is like idolatry, iniquity, and witchcraft. See, the measure of our obedience is the Word of God. I mean, if I am not bringing my life into*

conformity with His Word, then I'm not obeying Him.

The motive for my obedience is the love of God. The measure of my obedience is the Word of God, the degree to which I bring my life into conformity with this Word. Now you know, I'm speaking to a lot of people tonight who if they were honest would say to me, "Jesus Christ is not real in my life. Oh, I believe in Jesus, and in a way I love Jesus, and I'm trusting Jesus to get me to heaven, and I really expect to go to heaven, but really, if I were to be honest with you, Adrian Rogers, I would have to say that Jesus is someone more that I know about than I know, and He's not really real to me like some people talk about Jesus Christ being real to them. He doesn't really manifest Himself to me, and I don't have that intimate personal relationship with the Lord Jesus." If you'd be honest, many of you would say that. And I'm going to tell you why. Do you want to know why? It's because you're not obeying the Word of God.

I want to show you one of the most pungent verses in all of the Bible. It's John 14, verse 21—look at it: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:"*—now notice—*"and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father..."*—now you want the Father to love you? Then love the Son. You want you want to prove that you love the Son? Then keep the commandments of the Son of God. But now notice—*"he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,"*—and watch this next phrase—*"and will manifest myself to him."*

Do you want Jesus to be real to you? You want Jesus to show Himself to you? It's so simple: Find His Word, start obeying His Word, and Jesus Christ will suddenly become very, very real to you, and you won't have to be talking about, Why is God so far off? Why do the heavens seem like brass when I pray? Why is it that everybody else seems to be happy in Jesus but I'm not happy in Jesus? It's because, dear friend, you're not obeying the Word of God. "Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." It is so plain, if you want Jesus Christ to be real to you.

Look, if you will, in the verses that follow—verse 22: *"Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"* How is it you're going to make yourself real to us? *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"* (John 14:22–23). That's how I'm going to do it. I'm just going to dwell in your heart in such a real and a vital way that you just know that I'm in there. But you must be keeping my Word; you must be obeying me.

Have you ever wondered sometimes why you can't understand the Bible, you read the Bible and you just don't understand it? Well, I'll tell you why. Anytime you read a commandment in the Word of God, and God makes it plain to you that's what He wants you to do, and you haven't been doing it and you need to start doing it, at the point

where you say, “I’m not going to do that; now what else is new?” at that point you’re going to cease to understand the Scripture. At that point, from there on, the only understanding you’ll have of the Scripture will be the understanding of a carnal, natural man, and *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,”* and *“neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Bible will become a dull book to you. And if you would tell the truth, you’d rather be watching television, you’d rather be out at a restaurant, you’d rather be reading the newspaper, than reading the Bible, and yet you believe the Bible, and you love the Word of God, and there are many things in the Bible you’d like to understand, and you say, “Pastor, why is it I don’t understand the Bible?” I’ll tell you why. You’re not obeying the Bible. The way—put this down in your heart and get it down there good, and I hope you’ll never forget it—*the way to understand the part of the Bible you don’t understand is to obey the part you do understand.* Now please don’t forget that. The way to understand the part of the Bible you don’t understand is to obey the part that you do understand.

Suppose you come up to some commandment in the Bible and you refuse to obey it, and then you read a few verses further, and you say, “Lord, show me what this means,” and God says, “I’m not going to tell you.” You say, “Lord, you’re not going to tell me? Why, God? I really want know.” God says, “You are a hypocrite. You don’t really want to know. Because if you really wanted to know, then you would obey that which I’ve already shown you, and when you start to obey what I’ve already shown you, then I’m going to show you more.”

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no way—no way—to really know Jesus in a vital way, there is no way to really understand this book in a living way, except through obedience.

III. The Holy Spirit Is the Might of Our Obedience

Now look. The love of God is the motive of obedience, the Word of God is the measure of obedience, and just to put it the other way, the love of Christ is the secret of obedience, the Word of Christ is the standard of obedience—you’re going to obey Him by his Word. Now let’s go on and think not only of the motive, and the measure, but the might of obedience.

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I just can’t love the Lord that way, and I just don’t have enough strength to obey Him that way.” Well, you’re quite right. And I don’t either. You see, the Christian life isn’t a hard life; it’s an impossible life. And the only way that you’re going to obey the Lord is for God to give you supernatural strength to obey Him. So it’s not by happenstance that He speaks of keeping His commandments in verse 15, and then in verse 16 He says, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world*

cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:16–18).

Now here if the task seems too great for you, just relax, because obeying the Lord is not in the strength of your flesh; it is the in the power and the might of the Holy Spirit of God. You cannot love Him without the Spirit; you cannot obey Him without the Spirit. And here when the Lord says, “I will send you another Comforter,” you can translate that correctly, “I will send you a strengthener, someone to strengthen you, someone to stand along side of you, someone to guide you and energize you.” You’re not called upon to do it by yourself. And that strengthener is the Holy Spirit of God.

You know, people never really have understood how to live the Christian life. They miss it always because they leave the Holy Spirit out.

There are some people who think the answer is intellectual, if they can just go to their library and study. And we spend millions and millions of dollars on teaching programs, and people study and study and study, and they go to class after class after class, with their heads getting more full and their hearts getting more empty. I want to say to you seminary students that are here tonight that studying is not going to make you spiritual; it just will not do it. And you can backslide with a Bible under your arm. The answer is not intellectual.

There are other people who think the answer is emotional. And so they come into a certain kind of a service where everything is hyped up, and there’s a certain kind of rhythmic music and a certain kind of a beat, and there’s a certain kind of oratory from the pulpit, and there’s a certain kind of give-and-take from the people, till people get themselves kind of hyped up. And there is nothing really wrong with emotion. I’m not against emotion. I’m not against people getting excited in church. And if your cup overflows, let it overflow. Now don’t shove it over. But if it overflows, that’s all right. I’m not against that. But people come to the front, you know, and in some of the services they get down at the alter, and people will beat on their back and whisper in their ear, and the drums will play and all of this singing, and they get all hyped up, and then after a while they go out, and they’re trying to live in the glow of that emotional experience, and the next day the only thing that they have is a jaded memory of a great experience.

The answer is not intellectual. The answer is not emotional. And there are other people who think the answer must be in activity, and their motto is “A busy Christian is a happy Christian,” and “Work, work, work, go, go, go.” Now there are people who are just so busy that they’re always doing something and always acting, and their motto is “Do better and try harder,” but the whole time they’re trying, they’re failing, and that’s not the answer.

Other people believe the answer is the answer of the Pharisee: just giving up things.

It's amazing what people will give up. This season of the year, we've just come through a season of the year where people give up certain things. Now certainly there are things that we ought to give up, things that dishonor our Lord we ought to give up, and things that keep us from being spiritual we ought to give up, and things that are a hindrance to us we ought to give up, and things that are contrary to the Word of God we ought to give up. But did you know you can just give up things and put things away from you until you become just a cold bitter Pharisee, and you've pruned your limbs, and you strengthen your roots, and you're worse off than you were before?

What is the strength of obedience? What is the might of obedience? The secret of obedience now is love for the Lord. The standard of obedience is the Word of the Lord. But the strength of obedience is the Spirit of the Lord—the Spirit of the Lord. *“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”*

Now I want you to notice what the Lord Jesus says here. He doesn't say that *it* will abide with thee, but *He* shall abide with you. Learn this: The Holy Spirit is a person—not a thing, not an influence. Sometimes you hear a new Christian or those who have not been taught yet speak of the Holy Spirit as an *it*. The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person. They believe that the Holy Spirit is a force or an influence, the Spirit of God, but they do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person as God the Father is a person, and as God the Son is a person, and they reject and repudiate the idea of the Holy Trinity. And one of the reasons they reject the idea of the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—is that it's unreasonable to them.

Well, dear friend, never reject that which is unreasonable to you, because our great God is always beyond human reason. Someone has said of the Trinity, “Try to explain it, you lose your mind; deny it, you lose your soul.” The Holy Spirit is a person, a person just as real as I'm a person, just as real as Jesus is a person, just as real as God the Father is a person.

Now when I say to you that's He's a person, I don't mean that He has a body, but I mean that He has personality. And when I say that He has personality, I don't mean that He's taken a Dale Carnegie course or well liked. Don't get the idea of personality that way. I mean that He has the attributes of personhood, which is intelligence. For example, the Holy Spirit is intelligent. We read in Romans chapter 8 and verse 27, *“He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit”* (Romans 8:27). The Holy Spirit has a mind. That's the reason that the early apostles and disciples, even though they were uneducated and unlettered men, spoke with great power and great wisdom. Why? The Holy Spirit in them, who has a mind, was giving them that wisdom.

The Holy Spirit has emotion, feeling. For example, the Bible says in Ephesians

chapter 4 and verse 30, *“And grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”* (Ephesians 4:30). Now you see, the Holy Spirit can be grieved and influenced. A thing can't be grieved. Only a person can be grieved. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5, verse 5, *“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 5:5). The Holy Ghost loves, and He's a person, because only a person can love, and because of His love I can love God, and I can love you.

The Holy Spirit not only has a mind, not only does He have emotions, the Holy Spirit has a will. We read in Acts chapter 13 and verse 2, *“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). And so the Holy Spirit has a will for my life. The Holy Spirit has a will for your life. And there's no need for us to be floundering around like a ship without a sail, a compass, and a rudder on a stormy sea. I ought to be hearing the Holy Spirit saying to me, *“This is the way, walk ye in it”* (Isaiah 30:21). The Bible says, *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:6). And how will He do it? By the Holy Spirit of God. For the Bible says, *“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”* (Romans 8:14).

Now what I'm trying to say is this: that Jesus is saying that the strength for obedience, the might for obedience, is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is a person. Now if you don't understand that the Holy Spirit is a person, you're going to be so mixed up and messed up you'll never be a victorious Christian. Why is it important to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person rather than an influence?

Well, it's so important to worship. You won't worship a thing, you worship a person, and the Holy Spirit is to be worshiped. Don't let the Holy Spirit be a forgotten person of worship. And as you meet to worship this Sunday night, next Sunday night, in your private devotion, worship God the Father, worship God the Son, and worship God the Holy Spirit. It's so important to worship.

Friend, listen. It's so important to service. Do you know why many people don't obey the Lord? They don't understand the principle of the Holy Spirit. They think that the Holy Spirit is some sort of a power, that if they can get that power within them, they can use that power. They think of the power of the Spirit as some sort of a supernatural force that comes in and takes over their lives. The Holy Spirit is not a force that I use; the Holy Spirit is a person who uses me. You see, it is not for me to get more of it; it is for Him to get more of me. People are talking about having more of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't give the Spirit by measure (John 3:34). It's not whether I get more of Him; it's how much of Him that He has of me. Listen, friend. I'll never serve the Lord until I understand that He is a person wanting to control me and take control of me.

It's so important to blessing to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person. You see, He's here to take Jesus' place. Notice what He says in John chapter 14, beginning

again in verse 15: *“If you love me, keep my commandments.”* And now notice verse 16: *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.”*

Now there are two words in the Greek language that mean “another.” One means “another of a different kind,” like a flower, “but I’m going to show you another thing: here is a watch.” Now that word *another* means “another of a different kind,” but “here is a lily and here is another lily, another just like it.” Now the Greeks would have a different word for us, the word *another*, if it meant “another of the same kind” rather than “another of a different kind.” And that is the word that is used here when Jesus says, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter”*; it is the Greek word that means “another of the same kind.”

Do you want me to give you a good definition of the Holy Spirit? Christ in the Christian. He is within me. He is Christ in my heart. Now if you don’t understand that He is a person, how mixed up you’re going to be.

You see, suppose a mother had to go away and leave her little babies, and she said to the babies, “Now don’t worry; I’m going to send you another to comfort you,” and she gives them a digital radio, or a clock, or a speedometer, or something like that, and says, “Now this will comfort you.” It can’t comfort them. It would have to be someone like her, another of the same kind.

And so when the Lord Jesus says, “I’m going away, but I’m sending you another,” He’s not sending us a thing, He’s not sending us an influence; He is sending us a person. How sweet must have been the fellowship of Jesus and the disciples, how let down they would have been if the Lord Jesus were just sending some sort of an influence rather than a person. Don’t you ever let somebody tell you that the Holy Spirit is not a person. He has the emotions of a person. He has the mind of a person. He has the will of a person. He is the third person in the Holy Trinity. And because of that He is so absolutely essential to obeying the Lord. It’s not what I do for God that counts; it’s what God does in me. And the program of the Holy Spirit is so simple. The Holy Spirit just asks what would Jesus do, and then He does it, because the Holy Spirit is here now on earth to represent Jesus.

Say, I want to ask you a question, and I want you to think it through: If you had your choice, which would you choose; if you could have the Lord Jesus Christ here in this auditorium tonight, I mean, standing up here, you could see Him just as plainly as you see me, and have the Lord Jesus Christ up here tonight to open the Word of God and preach a sermon, I mean, his bodily form standing right up here, if you could have Him to do that, or if, on the other hand, you could have the Holy Spirit within you tonight, just like you have Him, which would you choose? I hope you would say, “I would choose the Holy Spirit within me.”

Now most of us would say, ‘Oh, I wish I could have lived back then; I just wish I

could have been back then when our Lord walked this earth.” Listen, friend. Turn to John chapter 16 and verse 7 and see what our Lord says—John chapter 16 and verse 7. Jesus said, *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away:”—*a loose translation: *“It is better for you that I go away”—“for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”* (John 16:7). Now what Jesus is saying is, “You are better off with the Holy Spirit inside you than you are with me beside you.” Now never forget that: “You are better off with the Holy Spirit inside you than you would ever be with me beside you.” *“It is expedient for you”—*it is better for you—*“that I go away.”*

Conclusion

Thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit in me. Remember this: that if I love the Lord Jesus Christ, that’s why I’m going to keep this commandment. Love for Jesus is the motive for obedience. The Word of God is the measure of my obedience—I cannot claim that I’m obeying if I’m not bringing my life in to conformity with this Word. But the Spirit of God is the might of my obedience. Oh, the strength of my obedience is the Holy Spirit within me. I’m so grateful that I don’t have to do it myself, and I know that as I yield my life to Him, He takes over, and He’s changing me, and He’s transforming me, and He will do the same for you.

I want us to bow our heads together in prayer—every head bowed, every eye closed; no one stirring, no one looking around. I want to ask you a question tonight: Do you love Jesus? Do you really love Him? Jesus said, “If you love me, you’ll keep my commandments.” Is the desire of your heart to keep His commandments? Secondly, are you bringing your life therefore into accordance with the Word of God? Are you keeping His Word? Is His Word the standard of your life? Is it really? Or is it the fashions and the ideas of your friends, and what you read in the newspaper, and what you see in the library, and what you decide what you want to do? Is the Word of God the standard for your life? Is it really? And then, is the Holy Spirit energizing you, filling you and energizing you to love Jesus and to obey Jesus?

If not, why don’t you let Him right now? Why don’t you say: “Spirit of God, forgive me for treating you like you’re some sort of a thing rather than a person. And Spirit of the living God, I yield my life to you right now. Take control my life. Make me the person you want me to be. Dear Spirit of God, I yield my life to you. Father, bless me and help me that I might yield more fully. For truly I have spoken to myself tonight, and I failed you, dear Lord, in so many ways, but dear Lord, tonight, before these my people, I want to yield my life to the Holy Spirit. Spirit of the living God, help me to love thee in such a way that I will hear His Word and keep it and obey it, and that He will manifest himself to me. What I pray for myself grant that others will be praying for their selves tonight. In the

name of Jesus. Amen”? †

How to Get Your Prayers Answered

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 14, 1986

Main Scripture Text: John 15

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

JOHN 15:7

Outline

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Introduction

I want to talk to you about getting your prayers answered tonight. If the time has not yet come, the time may be very, very close to you when the most important thing for you on the face of this earth is an answered prayer. If it has not yet come, that time may be very, very close. Now I suppose that most of us have prayed and not had our prayers answered. And I have also met people who were almost amazed when their prayers were answered. Believe it or not, God answered my prayer, as though that is unusual. Well, a Christian who is living a normal Christian life ought to be having his prayers answered constantly. It ought to be a normal and a natural thing to have our prayers answered. And so I want to talk to you now about how to get your prayer answered.

Would you take God's Word, please, and turn with me to John chapter 15, John chapter 15. By the way, we're just going to do a Bible study tonight and it's going to be quite simple. But in John chapter 15 and verse 7 Jesus makes an astounding promise. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." I submit to you that is a colossal promise. I didn't make it; I just read it. It is there. Either it is true or it is not true. I choose to believe it is true. So, therefore, let's listen to it again. These are the words of the Savior. Jesus said, "If ye abide in me,

and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Well, we’ve asked many things and it hasn’t been done. Then, evidently, we’ve not been abiding in Him and His Word has not been abiding in us.

Now I want us to think some, therefore, about what it means to abide in Him and to have His Word abide in us. Or, again, let’s talk a little bit about the life that can pray and get our prayers answered.

I. The Life That Prays Is a Converted Life

Now, first of all, that life, I think it needs to go without saying, must be a converted life. We need to be saved. Now just go back in, into John chapter 14 and, and look with me in verse 6: “Jesus saith unto him (that is, to Thomas), I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Now many of us use this as a soul winning verse. We say the only way you can come to God by, for salvation is through Jesus, and that is absolutely, totally correct. But we also are coming to God every time we pray. And, therefore, we must come to God on the basis of Jesus Christ.

Now go with me to John chapter 14, verses 13 and 14 and pick up the same meaning. Jesus said here in John chapter 14, verse 13, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it.” So you see here in John 14:6 he’s talking about coming to the Father in prayer, as well as coming to God in salvation. And the only way we can come to God the Father in prayer and expect and have a promise of that prayer answered is to come in the name of Jesus.

Now, while we’re in the neighborhood, turn to John 16 and look with me in verse 23. Jesus is saying the same thing in another way. “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” Again, Jesus is saying we must ask in His name. And then He says, “Hitherto (that is, before this) ye asked nothing in my name...” And then He gives us another invitation to pray. “...ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” And who would not be full of joy when he’s having his prayers answered?

Now, without Jesus there is no way to the Father. We come to the Father through Jesus in the name of Jesus. We must pray in the name of Jesus. And in order to pray in the name of Jesus, we have to be born again to pray in the name of Jesus. We cannot pray in the name of Jesus without being born again. We have to be converted. We’re merely forging His name to our prayers if we are not saved and born again. It is through Jesus.

Let me give you another verse here that’s not in John, and we’re going to look at a lot of verses, but it is Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 18. And it is speaking of Jesus, and it says, “Through him (that is, through Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit

unto the Father.” We pray in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. We must be able, therefore, to pray in the name of Jesus.

Now what does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? Does it mean that when I finish my prayer, I may add, “In the name of Jesus?” and therefore I prayed in the name of Jesus? No. I can add “In the name of Jesus.” I can say those words and not necessarily be praying in the name of Jesus. And I can pray in the name of Jesus without adding those words. You know, there are some people who think it’s blasphemous if you pray and you don’t say at the end of your prayer, “In the name of Jesus, amen.” I think I almost always put those words on the end of my prayer. And don’t think you can misunderstand me very easily. But, you know, if you’ll read the entire Bible, I don’t think you can find a prayer in the Bible that ends that way. It’s interesting, isn’t it? That isn’t exactly what Jesus meant, that He’s just talking about a little magic formula that we tack onto the end of a prayer, and, ipso facto, it’s all right. What He means when He says pray in the name of Jesus, to pray in the name of Jesus means, number one, to pray with His approval, with His approval. Number two: It means to pray with His authority. You see, if He approves it, then you have His authority behind it. And then it also means to pray for His acclaim, for His praise.

Now if you work in a factory and you’re an inspector, a quality control, and the piece of whatever it is comes past, and you put your name on it, that says you approve it, you approve it. That is, there in your name. Or if somebody, you send after something and you sign a requisition. You say, “Get this for me,” and you put your name on it. Or even more, you sign a check. It has your name on it. And the bank has the authority to give the money. Name means authority. So when we pray in the name of Jesus, it means this prayer has Jesus’ approval and this, this prayer is, has Jesus’ authority. And, therefore, it is for His glory, for His glory. To pray in His name means for His praise.

A while back our Jewish friends here in Memphis decided that they wanted to honor me, and I was honored that they wanted to honor me. And they sent me a beautiful certificate and said, “Doctor Rogers, there has been a grove of trees planted in Israel in your name, in your name.” So they’re saying, “We did this to honor you. It’s in your name.”

And so, when I am praying for something Jesus approves, when I am praying for something that His, has His authority behind it, when I’m praying for something that gives Him praise, then I’m praying in the name of Jesus. And the only way that I can pray in the name of Jesus that way is to be saved, to be born again to pray in the name of Jesus. So, to begin with, a prayer that gets answered has to be a prayer that comes from a converted life.

II. The Life That Prays Is a Cleansed Life

Now, secondly, it also has to be a prayer that comes from a cleansed life, a cleansed life. Because, you see, it's not enough only to be saved. We have to be living clean. Now it's very obvious. I want to give you a lot of Scriptures here. You might jot them down.

Psalm 66, verse 18 is a very wonderful Scripture. It's a prayer promise. Now we like to quote the prayer promises, like the one that I quoted in John 15:7. But I'll give you another prayer promise, and it's this one: Psalm 66:8, verse 18. And it says this: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Hey, that's a promise, too, isn't it? God promises not to hear prayer, as well as God promises to hear prayer. Now it doesn't say if I've sinned, God will not hear me. Because if it had said that, He wouldn't hear me. Don't smile. He wouldn't hear you either. Right? Like the preacher who stood up and said, "If God were to put all liars in hell, where would I be?" They all laughed. He said, "I'd be preaching to an empty house." Listen. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now the Bible doesn't say if I've sinned, the Lord will not hear me. But the Bible says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart..." Do you know what to regard something means? It means to give it place. If I have a sin in my heart that I harbor, unconfessed, unrepented of sin in my heart, if I have regard for that sin, God will not hear me. It's very obvious. If God were to hear my prayer while I harbor sin in my heart, what would that be? It would be an encouragement for further sin. God would be saying, "I bless that kind of a life. That's the kind of a lifestyle I can bless." Well, then, what would that be? That would be an encouragement to me to sin. God is not going to aid and abet our sin. And David knew better, so he wrote that in Psalm 66:18.

Isaiah knew better. Turn to Isaiah chapter 1 and look in verse 13 if you will. Isaiah is very clear in this matter of prayer. All right. "Bring no more vain oblations (the word oblation, it means offerings); incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

Now they were going through all of the incantations, the rigmaroles, the rituals of their meetings and God says, "Hey, get this out of here. I don't want this. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands..." Now he's taking about prayer now, "Oh God." "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: Learn to do well..." Now God is saying that religion without repentance is repugnant and sickening to God. We pray and God just turns His back on us. Not only must there be a converted life; there must be a cleansed life. Isaiah knew it.

Ezra knew the same thing. Jot this Scripture down, Ezra chapter 9 and verse 6. Here's what Ezra said. And, by the way, Ezra was in a building program. And Ezra said, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face unto thee, O my God: for our iniquities have, have increased over our head, and our trespasses has grown up unto the heavens." That is, "O God, I just blush even to lift up my face." Ezra knew that sin had to be dealt with before he prayed.

James knew better than to try to pray with unconfessed sin. James said in James chapter 5, verse 16, listen to it, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of (what kind of a man?) righteous man availeth much."

The apostle John knew better than to try to pray without a cleansed life. The apostle John said in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 22, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we do his commandments, ah, we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

In the Bible, there's the story in the book of Joshua of a horrible failure on the part of God's people when they went to battle. Now the battle should have been won because God had given the people the land of Canaan. And God said no enemy would be able to stand against them. And yet, they went against a little, insignificant city of Ai (or as some say I. Just spelled A-i), and they were ignominiously defeated. And Joshua went to the Lord. I mean, he fell on his face. He put his face in the dust, and he said to God, "Lord, why did You let all of this happen? Why have You humiliated us? Why have You forsaken us?" And God said, "Get up, Joshua. Israel has sinned. Why liest thou upon thy face?" In other words, "Shut up. Stop whining at Me and deal with the sin in the camp."

You see, prayer is not a smokescreen in which somehow we can hide our sins. You know what so much of our prayer is? "God bless us, anyhow. I mean, we're not going to repent. We're not going to deal with sin. Just bless us." Hey, folks, He, He can't do it. He will not do it. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Do you know some reason? It's sometimes it is so patently simple why God doesn't hear our prayer. Just sin in our lives. You don't have to be a theologian to understand that. Just unconfessed, unrepented of sin in our lives. Well, you say, "Nobody's perfect." No, but He is perfect. And if you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sin and to cleanse you. And anybody here tonight can pray from a clean heart if he's willing to do what I said tonight and not just beat around the bush, but name it and nail it and put it under the blood and then He will cleanse you. And then, my dear friend, your heart will condemn you not and you will have confidence toward God.

Now I could mention the kinds of, of sins that, ah, ah, keep us, God from hearing our prayer, but let me just talk to you about a very common sin. I have a list of them here

tonight, and I'm not going to deal with them. But let me just show you what I'm talking about.

Suppose, now, now many folks here tonight that you would say, "Well, you know, I don't lie and I don't steal and I don't kill and I don't drink and I don't chew and I don't go with girls who do. And, I'm, I'm not all that kind of bad a guy, see." But I wonder, do you have in your heart tonight a sin that God links with idolatry? You know what it is? Covetousness. You're just covetous. And God says that covetousness is idolatry. And did you know tonight that if you have in your heart just a sin of covetousness, that God cannot hear your prayer. Let me show you some Scriptures here.

Look, for example, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 21, verse 13. Now I'm just, I could take any particular type of sin, but I just feel led tonight to deal with this for a few moments. Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 13: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." If there's somebody that the Holy Spirit of God tells you to help, somebody that has a need, and you just stonewall that need, God says, "All right. And you pray and I'll not hear you." That's a frightening Scripture, isn't it? You stop your ears at the cry of the poor.

Look again now. Let's, let's just turn that over and go to the New Testament and look in Luke chapter 6 and verse 38 and see just the opposite of this, though. God says here in Luke chapter 6 and verse 38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Now, God says you withhold from others, I'll withhold from you. God says you give and God says it will be given to you. And He's talking here in this particular case about physical, material goods, because he says, "...shall men give unto your bosom..." Hey, folks, he's not talking about some sort of a spiritual blessing. He's saying, actually, you can prosper by the way that you give.

Now Jesus rebuked a man's prayer just because the man was selfish. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 12 here for a moment. I begin in verse 13: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak unto my brother, that he may divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Now whether you realize it or not, here was a man who was praying to Jesus. He said, "Lord, I want my brother to divide my inheritance. Answer my prayer and see it's done." Well, I'll tell you what. Jesus, He said, "Huh, who do you think I am? Who made me a judge over you?" Jesus knew that this man was eaten up with covetousness. Now he's praying, but he didn't get his prayers answered.

You know, we like to quote the prayer promises. Let me show you a prayer promise.

I guess, almost everybody here tonight knows this. Turn to, to Philippians chapter 4 and, and, and, and see if you've not quoted this promise so many times. You probably, this is one of your refrigerator verses. You've got this one on your refrigerator. All right, now look. It's just one of those verses that we just think is so great and so wonderful in Philippians. Ah, chapter 4 and verse 19. Look at it. It says here, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Now we've said before that a text without a context is what? A pretext. Now who is God speaking to? God says, "All right, I'm..." God, Paul says, "God is going to meet all of your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Well, now let's back up a little bit and look in Philippians chapter 4. And here's what Paul says to this same people in Philippians chapter 4, verse 14: "Notwithstanding ye have well done, in that ye did communicate with my affliction." In plain English, "You helped me when I was in trouble." And then, he goes on to say in this passage of Scripture in verse 15, "Now ye Phil, ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving" Just underscore that. "No church underwrote my missionary enterprise and receiving, but ye only. You were the ones who had a giving spirit. You were the ones who helped to underwrite this ministry."

And then verse 16: "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." Paul is saying, "Hey, folks, I was really needing financial support and you folks here at Philippi, you sent it and you sent it and you sent it again. " And then, God said to those people, "And My God will supply all your need according to His riches in, in glory by Christ Jesus." Do you understand what I'm saying? It's not just a verse for anybody. This is, this is an illustration of what Jesus said when He, when He said, "You give, and it will be given unto you." And the reason that many of us don't get our prayers answered, folks, is that we just have a covetous spirit. Now, and when we do, God cannot hear our prayer.

III. The Life That Prays Is a Controlled Life

Now listen. There must be that converted praying. There must be that cleansed praying. And then, another thing. Not only must there be a converted life and a cleansed life, but there must be a controlled life. It's not enough to be saved and even cleansed to get your prayer answered. Your life must be controlled by the Spirit of God. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you..."

Now Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18 says we're to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Holy Spirit. Never pray unless you pray in the Holy Spirit. Always in the Holy Spirit. Look at it. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..." Now if you don't pray in the Spirit, hey, folks,

you're not praying. We pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

Now in Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10 the Holy Spirit is called "...the spirit of supplication..." The spirit of supplication. Jude commands us to pray in the Holy Ghost. Jude, verse 20: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

Now all of these are saying the same thing, that our lives must be motivated and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. How are we going to know the will of God? Only by the Holy Spirit. You see, we must pray in the will of God. Well, how am I going to know the will of God? Well, sometimes the will of God is found right here in this book. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification. God is not willing that any should perish," and so forth. But a lot of times God's will is not found here. Shall I go to college A or college B? Shall I take this job or that job? Shall I marry this girl or that girl? You can't find that in the Bible. How are you going to know? The Spirit of God is going to have to speak to you.

Look, if you will, in Romans chapter 8 and verse 26. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities..." Now the word infirmities means our weaknesses. "...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." Now isn't that true? You don't know what to pray for. I don't know what to pray for so many times. I've said before, sometimes we get here and somebody will be sick. We prayed for the sick tonight and we asked God to heal them. It may not be God's will to heal them; I mean, not in this world. God want, may want to bring them home. And we're saying, "Lord, let them stay," and Jesus is saying, "Father, I pray for those whom thou hast given me, that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." By the way, you notice how much more we want to pray for the sick than we do the lost? We're more interested in keeping God's people out of heaven than we are the lost out of hell. But it is God's will sometimes to heal the sick. And God heals supernaturally and naturally. God heals instantaneously, in time, and in eternity. And, by the way, those who died are healed. Now that's what the Scripture means when it says, "With His stripes we are healed." We are healed. And those who have died are the only ones really who are well. The rest of us are sick.

All right. Now. But how do we know? Suppose your grandmother is 80 and you begin to pray. She's in the hospital. What are you going to pray? Lord, take her home or, Lord, raise her up. Dale, you went through that with your momma, didn't you? Sure, you did. How are you going to know how to pray? There are so many things we don't. Suppose there's a troublemaker in the church. You pray, "Lord, get rid of him." Saul was a troublemaker. The Bible says he made havoc of the church. I imagine there's some people saying, "God, strike him dead." God struck him alive. God saved him. What's God's will? I mean, folks, listen. We need the Holy Spirit of God to guide our praying as well as energize our praying. Not only is He the one who brings us to the Father, but

He's the one who teaches us what to say. Now the Bible says He helps us. He helps our infirmities. This word help, helpeth in the King James, is a very interesting word. It's a double prefix, and it means or at the same time. On the one hand it means to take hold of, and in the other hand it means instead of. That's very interesting. He takes hold of and He does it instead of us. Now the Holy Spirit of God helps our weaknesses. He takes hold, but He does it instead of us. What that means is, well, let me put it another way. It means to take hold of. It means instead of. And it means together with. Now let me get it all together. So what it means is this: That we cannot pray without Him; He cannot pray without us. He uses us as a vehicle of prayer, the Holy Spirit of God. We, He, ah, we cannot do it without Him. He will not do it without us. It is the Holy Spirit of God who inspires our prayers, guides our prayers, energizes our prayers, and sustains our praying. And sometimes He does it with groanings that cannot be uttered. Why does He do that? Number one: Because of our weakness. We need the strength. And, number two: Because of our ignorance. We don't know what to pray for as we ought. And so, the Holy Spirit of God wants to be a prayer partner with you. Now some people think praying in the Spirit is praying in tongues, that that's when you pray in the Spirit. Now there is a biblical gift of tongues, and I don't want to take the lid off that can tonight and get in all that, because we'd be here a couple more hours, but I want to tell you that's not what he's talking about when he says pray in the Spirit. He's talking about the Holy Spirit of God energizing and guiding your prayers and helping you to know the mind of God. And it's not that you will pray and, and wonder, Well, I don't know what I said, but it must have been wonderful. And maybe you'll never even know whether you got your prayers answered or not, and you won't even know what you said. How you going to praise God for answered prayer? Dear friend, He will lay it upon your heart what to pray for. And then you get the answer and you can say, "Praise God for answered prayer!" All right. Now listen.

IV. The Life That Prays Is a Committed Life

There must be a converted life. There must be a cleansed life. There must be a controlled life. Hey, one other thing. There must be a committed life, a committed life. Now what I mean by that is this: That you, in order to get your prayers answered, must be committed to doing the will of God. First John chapter 5, verse 14. We're almost finished now, so just hang right with me. First John chapter 5 and verse 14. Now look at it. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." That is, if you're asking in the will of God, then you can be assured that your prayer will be answered. Well, how can you know the will of God? In order to know the will of God in your life, you have to be

committed to do the will of God.

Now it's just this, folks. When you develop a life of commitment, God shows you His will. Ah, I can't say, "God, now show me your will so I can make up my mind whether I want to do it or not." He's not going to show me. But if I say, "Lord, my life is a piece of blank paper. You write on it whatever you want. It's, I've already signed it at the bottom." I am committed to Him. And then I will know His will. Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 1. "If we present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, totally acceptable to him, we'll prove what is His good, perfect, and acceptable will." God does not reveal His will to rebels. God does not reveal His will to you to satisfy your curiosity. When you get ready for instantaneous obedience, when you can pray as Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but thine be done," then prayer is going to become powerful.

V. The Life That Prays Is a Confident Life

Now let me just wrap it up by saying, as we say, let me just say that all of this will come up to the last thing that I want to mention of these five things. Not only a converted life. Not only a cleansed life. Not only a controlled life. Not only a committed life. **But all of** these come together, therefore, to be called what I'm going to call a confident life, a confident life. That is, now I have this assurance that I'm praying in the will of God. Now I can pray with faith. All of the encumbrances of faith have been removed. Matthew chapter 21 and verse 22: "And all things, whatsoever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Do you have difficulty believing God? Do you know why? You have encumbrances to faith in your heart and in your life. And unbelief is a symptom of something else. For the Bible says, "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." And it takes this confidence, this faith, to get our prayers answered. Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Conclusion

So if you'll get these other four things lined up, I just believe that you're going to find that confidence to pray and get prayer answered. So, we'd say with the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Jim, when you had us to close our eyes and praise Jesus tonight, one of the things I just praised Him for was answered prayer. I got convicted yesterday that I have not been asking Jesus for specific enough things. I asked Him for some specific things and He gave me just what I asked Him for, and I was just praising Him for answered prayer. And I'm just a novice. I, I tell you, I feel like I'm in the kindergarten in prayer, but I want to know.

Do you know who a real, real prayer warrior was? Let me just go back and say this. You know, a, a real prayer warrior was George Mueller of Bristol. He kept a diary of prayers. And, folks, listen to this. In that diary, he had recorded 25,000 answers to prayer, definite, specific answers to prayer. Now he, he, ah, he was asked to explain the secret. You know what he said? "Have faith in God." That's it! Have faith in God. Now it wasn't have faith in God. It was have faith in God. The emphasis not on the faith, but God. Have faith in God.

But, you see, unless I deal with these other areas, I'm not going to be able to have faith. Because when there's I'm not saved, or I'm not committed, or I'm not controlled, then I can't have faith because those things are stultifying and debilitating to faith.

Well, time to quit. Let's bow in prayer. Father, we thank You so much, Lord, for the great promises in this book concerning prayer. And, Lord, I would say with the disciples, "Teach us to pray." In Your name, amen.

The Life That Can Pray

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 9, 1983

Main Scripture Text: John 15:1–7, 16

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

JOHN 15:7

Outline

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- A. The Content of the Prayer
- B. The Character of the Person Doing the Praying
- I. God’s Word Is to Control Our Lives
- II. God’s Word Is Going to Cleanse You
- III. God’s Word Will Communicate to You the Will of God

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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn to John 15 if you would, please. And as we this morning were in Exodus 15, you’ll recognize this is another chapter that, ah, is numbered 15 that is one of the great chapters in the Bible, like Luke the 15th chapter, and John the 15th chapter, and Exodus the 15th chapter. Tonight I want to think with you and I want you to think with me about “The Life That Can Pray.” Now notice I didn’t say the man that can pray, the woman that can pray, but the life that can pray. John 15:1. Jesus is speaking. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” That means the vine dresser, the keeper of the vineyard. “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it (that means He prunes it), that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” Now notice verse 7, which is the key verse that I want to give you. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” And then a corresponding verse, verse 16 “Ye have not chosen me, but I have

chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: and whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” How would you like to live that way? Just, ah, whatever you ask, God gives it. To be able to pray and to know that you know that you know that your prayer is being answered. Be like the Lord Jesus and say, “Thank You, Father, I know that You always hear me.” I tell you, dear friend, to be in that kind of a relationship with God where your prayers are answered, I think would, is absolutely the most superlative relationship that a person could have with a father; to be so abiding in the Lord that His Word so abiding in us, that we could ask whatever we want and that our prayers would be answered.

Now there are two basic essentials to getting prayers answered. Now there are many more little corollaries and many more little ancillary things, but there are two basic essentials to get your prayers answered. Number one is the content of the prayer. That is, you must ask for the right things. And number two is the character of the one doing the praying. Now you might ask for the right thing, but if you don’t have the right character, if you’re not the right person, you’re not going to get your prayer answered. Or if you are the right person, but you’re asking for the wrong thing, of course, you’re not going to get your prayer answered. Now, so those two things are absolute essentials into getting a prayer answered.

A. The Content of the Prayer

Number one, the content of the prayer. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.” The prayer must be in the will of God. “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask Him anything according to His will, He heareth us.” Now remember what we’ve told you. Someone had said long ago that prayer is not bending God’s will to fit our will, but prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. That’s what prayer is.

B. The Character of the Person Doing the Praying

And so the content of the prayer must be within the framework of the will of God. That’s one requirement, one prerequisite. But the other is the character of the person doing the praying. The person who does the praying must have the kind of a life that God is pleased to bless. You see, dear friend, it is not important, only important that I know what to pray for, but that I am qualified to pray once I know what to pray for. Now these two things, the content of the prayer and the character of the one who is praying, the second is far more important than the first. It is far more important for you to have a right character than it is for you to know what to pray for. Now why is that? Well, dear friend, if we have the right character, the Holy Spirit can easily teach us what to pray for. But if we don’t have the right character; I mean, if we are not right with the Lord, then the Holy Spirit cannot teach us anything. So it is far more important that we have a right heart than a bright head. I mean, that, that we are right with God and then, ah, the rest of it

will come, more or less, naturally. I heard, for example, of a basketball coach who visited a high school campus. And on that high school campus was a young man who was 7 feet tall. The basketball coach was hanging around him all day long and during the lunch period was talking with him, and so forth, and told the youngster, "When you get out of this high school, I want you to come to XYZ College where I coach, and I want you to be on our basketball team. We're going to give you a full scholarship. We'll give you a bed and books, and we'll give you laundry money, and we'll give you tuition, and we'll help you with your studies. We'll do everything if you'll just come to our college and play basketball for us." He said, "But I don't know how to play basketball." He said, "That's all right. Come on." But he said, "I, I've never had a basketball in my hand." He said, "It doesn't make any difference. Come on." He said, "I don't even know the rules of basketball." He said, "It doesn't make any difference. Come on." He said, "Well, I don't understand. Why do you want me if I don't even know how to play basketball?" He said, "Son, I can teach you to play basketball. I can't teach you to be 7 feet tall." Now the Holy Spirit can teach us to pray if we have the basic qualifications of character; if He can find that character in us. Then the Holy Spirit can take that character and teach us to pray. And even if we have the right character and pray for the wrong thing, then the Holy Spirit will make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, and take the prayer and make it acceptable to the throne of God. So what I'm trying to say is, of the two things that are necessary for prayer to be effectual prayer, the content of the prayer and the character of the one doing the praying, the character of the one doing the praying is even more important than all of these other things. Now, actually, your prayer life is no greater than your personal life. It is the life that prays. And if you don't have character, Christian character, then your prayers are not going to get any higher than the light bulbs, or in this case, the chandelier. It is the life that prays. Do you remember when, ah, Joshua, ah, there, after the terrible defeat of the Israelites at the hands of the people of Ai, was on his face whining and complaining, and saying, "Lord, why did You let this happen?" God said to Joshua, "Joshua, why liest thou upon thy face. Get up. Israel hath sinned." What He was saying to Joshua was, "Joshua, ah, your prayers are not being heard because there's sin in the camp. When you get things right, when you assume your responsibilities that you ought to have been assuming as the leader of Israel, and when you purge out the sin that it is your right, duty, prerogative, and ability to do, then you can pray. But, Joshua, it is the life that prays." Now, friend, let me tell you something. In this thing of being a Christian, there are a lot of things that you can do and seem to be effective in and still not be right with God. Did you know that a man can preach and not be right with God, and he can even be effective as a preacher? Did you know that? Oh, he won't be as effective as he would have been. But Paul was talking about some that preach to add affliction to him, ah, to his bonds. He said, "But I rejoice

that Christ is preached and is preached.” And I believe you can get saved listening to an unsaved preacher because God, because somebody else may be praying for you. And God will take the Word of God, not because of that preacher, but because of someone else’s prayers, and so forth, and the preaching can be effective. Now I’m not saying that unsaved people ought to preach. Don’t misunderstand what I’m saying. But, but a man can teach and he can have truth, and he can communicate that truth and not be right with God. A man can go out and visit, and many have, and not be right with God. A man can witness and not be right with God. Now he can always preach better, he can always teach better, he can always, ah, visit better, he can always witness better if he is right with God. But now, let me tell you something. Nobody can pray whose not right with God. You can do all these other things, because those things are a man to man relationship. But prayer is a man to God relationship. And I may fool you, but I can’t fool Him. Now, ah, I want to tell you, dear friend, that I can be not right with God and get away with a lot of things in the physical realm, the material realm, the personal realm, the person to person realm, but I cannot fool God. I must have my heart right with God if I am to pray. Now I think we ourselves even instinctively know that. Ah, have you ever noticed the, how hard it is to pray when you know your heart’s not right with God? And, incidentally, that’s one reason we don’t pray more than we ought, because our hearts condemn us. We know when we are carnal. We know when we’re backslidden. We know that when we’re not right with God. We don’t even want to come to the place of prayer. And I want to tell you something, friend. You know, they say in a boxer what’s the first thing that goes? His legs, right? Is that right? That’s, that’s true. You know the first thing that goes in a Christian when he’s about to backslide? His prayer life. His prayer life. If your prayer life is weak, you are in the process of backsliding or you already have. That’s the first thing that goes. We don’t even feel like praying when our heart is not right with God. We don’t even want to come to the place of prayer. We have to fight ourselves to make ourselves come to the place of prayer when our prayer, when our hearts are not right with God. Now I want to tell you, friend, it is the life that prays. It is the life that prays. And the most important part of your prayer life is your heart condition. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Now that means if I look with favor, if I look with sympathy upon sin, that’s what it means to regard iniquity, then I’ve just cancelled out my prayer with God. First John 3:22: “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.” It is the life that prays. Now with that in mind, look again at verse 7, verse 7 of John 15. Here is the condition of a life that can pray. Here’s the qualification of a life that can pray. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Now here are the qualifications for the life that can pray. Here are the qualifications for the character of a person whose

prayer can reach God. We're not talking now about the content of the prayer, but we're talking about the character of the one doing the praying. There's a two-fold qualification to have the character that can pray, the life that can pray. And it's so simple, it's so plain, that we don't need a preacher really to explain this part to us. First of all, we must abide in Christ. Secondly, His words must abide in us. Now that's it. It's just plain. It's right there. "If you abide in Me," Jesus says, "and My words abide in you, then ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Now what does it mean to abide in Jesus? Well, to, ah, to abide in Jesus means that I am to be to Jesus the same thing that a branch is to a vine. What a branch is to a vine, I am to be to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what does the branch do? The branch accepts the vine's purpose for it. Now what is the vine's purpose for the branch? Well, look in verse 4 of this chapter. Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." Now what is the purpose, therefore, of the branch? It's to bring forth fruit. It's to bear fruit. Now what am I to do in my relationship to Jesus? I am to so be a part of Him and allow Him to so be a part of me that my life is in Him, His life is in me, our lives are so co-mingled together, not only do I have union with Him, but communion with Him, so that in my life there is fruit. And when there is that fruitfulness in my life, then I am the kind of a person who can pray. Now let me tell you what a branch is. A branch is a, a grape rack. That's all it is. It's just something to hang grapes on. It's something that, that, ah, that bears grapes and holds grapes. And, and, and, the, the grapes in clusters are to hanging from the branch. Now that's what I am to be to the Lord Jesus. He is to be producing His fruit in me. Now if you don't have fruit, you're not abiding. Now suppose you go to the store to get some fruit, and they're selling nothing there but, ah, branches, grape branches. And you come home with a, a sack full of grape branches. And you put some grape branches on your husband's plate and some grape branches on your plates and all the kids, and you all sit around and, and chew on the branches. Well, that doesn't make sense, does it? The branches are not important in themselves. The only purpose of the branch is to bear fruit. Look, if you will, again in, in verse 16 of this chapter. "Y, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." And so the wood of the vine, the wood of the branch is absolutely useless if it doesn't bear fruit. I mean, what, what, what good is it if it's not bearing fruit? Did you know that rabbinical law said that you could not even use the wood of the grapevine in the temple sacrifices to build a fire with? It didn't even burn good. You couldn't carve it. You couldn't make furniture out of it. You couldn't make fires out of it. It could be burned up, but itself produced very little energy. Was very little good for nothing except to be

gathered and to be burned and to be gotten out of the way. Now I am to be, if I want my prayers answered, I'm to be abiding in Jesus. And if I am abiding in Jesus, there's certain things that are going to be true. I am going to be producing fruit because of my union with the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't produce fruit because I try. I produce fruit because I abide. You've never seen a little branch out here worrying and writhing and squirming and saying, "What are you doing?" "I'm just trying to bear grapes." That's none of his business. He doesn't have to worry about that. All he has to do is to cling to the vine and let the life of the vine come into him and he will automatically bear grapes. I want to tell you, dear friend, that grapes are produced when we abide in the vine. There is the fruit that is produced. Now not only is it produced, but, dear friend, the very fact that it is there proves our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, our union with the Lord Jesus. Now what is this fruit that we're talking about, these grapes, what are they? Well, let me tell you what the fruit is. Paul tells us in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." When I abide in the Lord Jesus, there's going to be love, joy, goodness, temperance, longsuffering. All of these things are going to be in my heart. And what are these things? I have just described the Lord Jesus to you. It is the character. The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be in my heart. You see, the inward nature of a Christian is Jesus Christ. And when this fruit is hanging from my life in gorgeous clusters for you to come and to pick and to enjoy, because I don't bear the fruit for myself. I bear the fruit for you. You don't bear the fruit for yourself. You bear the fruit for me. And when you can pluck from my life this fruit, and when you can see in my life the character of Jesus, the love, the joy, the peace, the gentleness, the good, the longsuffering, when you can see the patience, when you can see all of that in my life, then you can say that man is abiding in Jesus. If you can't see it, there's no way that you can know who I am or what I am. Did you know that, that it's hard to tell fruit trees many times? I can't tell one fruit tree from another. It's hard for me to tell a, a pear from a peach. Ah, it's hard for me when I go down to Florida to tell a tangerine from an orange tree from a grapefruit tree, from a tangelo to a cumquat until I see the fruit. And when I see the fruit, I can say, "Hey, I know what that one is. I know what this one is. I know what that one is," because it bears that kind of fruit. Didn't Jesus say, "By their fruits ye shall know them?" Huh. Now look. The proof that I'm in Jesus is not what I say to you; it's do you see the fruit? If you see the fruit in me, if I see that fruit in your life, not only is that fruit produced by Him, but it is proof that I'm in Him. And listen. When it is produced by Him, and when it is proof that I'm in Him, I want to tell you, that fruit will remain and it will persevere through Him. It will be permanent because I'm in Him. Look, if you will, in verse 16. He says here again in verse 16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit (now watch this), and that your fruit should remain..."

Now if I am really abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ, what I am doing right now and what I'll be doing tomorrow and the next day, and what I have been doing, is going to last. It's not going to be wood, hay, and stubble at the judgment seat. Sometimes in a town some evangelist will blow through. He'll put up a tent or come to some church. He'll hold a big crusade. And he'll have what he calls a lot of decisions. And you come back six months from then and you can't find the people. Now, friend, when the Lord comes to measure our work, He doesn't measure decisions; He measures disciples. How many people are there? You see, Jesus said, "When you abide in me, you will bring forth fruit, and your fruit will remain." That fruit is produced by Him. That fruit is proof that I'm in Him. And that fruit is permanent through Him. It will remain when His life is in me and my life is in Him. I remember reading about Dwight L. Moody, who was a great evangelist, but I'm sure he had some fruit that didn't remain. One time he was on a street corner and there was an old, inebriated drunk came up to him and said, "Mr. Moody." He said, "Yes." He says, "Don't you remember me?" Said, "I'm one of your converts." And Moody said, "Well, you must be one of mine; you're not one of the Lord's." I think so many times that we have fruit, but it doesn't remain, because we have not been abiding in the Lord. Now what I'm trying to say is this: That Jesus laid down a prerequisite for getting our prayers answered. If you abide in Me. And the proof that we're abiding in Him is fruitfulness, fruitfulness that remains, fruitfulness that is the character of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But now, conversely, look, if you will, let's just turn it over. "Not only must you abide in Me, but My words must abide in you." (verse 7). Now what does that mean, for His word to abide in us? Well, let's look at it for a moment. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

I. God's Word Is to Control Our Lives

Now, first of all, that means I, I believe, that His word is to control our lives. We're to be controlled by the Word of God. The word *abide* here literally means to be at home. It means to dwell permanently. Is the Word of God at home in your heart? Is it? Does the Word of God, as Paul said, dwell richly in you? Hosea was remonstrating with the people of his time, and he spoke on behalf of the Lord Jehovah, and he said, "My words are a stranger unto you." Now, you know, in the land of Israel, a stranger could come. And the stranger could live in the land of Israel. And a stranger could work in the land of Israel. But when the government met, and when the tribal councils met, and when decisions were made, that person, not being a part of the commonwealth of Israel, had no say whatever. He was disenfranchised. He had no votes. He had no rights. He had no authority. Though he lived there, he was a stranger and, therefore, had no authority. Now God said to the people of Hosea's day, "My words are like that. My words are a

stranger to you. My words are just sort of sojourning in your heart and in your life.” Do you know what’s happening to some of you, some of you here who are listening? You’re going to hear these words, but God’s Word will not be at home in your heart after I’ve preached it. God’s Word will be a stranger in your heart. And God’s Word will not have authority in your life. You see, for the Word of God to abide in you, it means that you are controlled by the Word of God. I want to ask you a question. If it is the life that prays, are you controlled by the Word of God? Or let me ask you another question. Is there any teaching of God and God’s Word that you’re consciously and willfully disobeying? Is there? Then no wonder your prayer is not answered. Some of you ought to have believer’s baptism, but you refuse it, and you wonder why your prayers are not answered. Some of you have been disobedient about tithing. God’s Word is in you, but it’s a stranger. It has no authority in your life. And you wonder why your prayers are not answered. You say, “Brother Rogers, tithing is legalism.” Not if you love Jesus. Not if you love Jesus. It’s a wonderful privilege to tithe and give beyond the tithe. Some of you know that there are grievances that must be put right, for the Word of God says, “If it be possible, live peaceably with all men.” But you won’t do it. God’s Word does not abide in you. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, “He that turneth away his ear from the hearing of the law, even his prayers shall be an abomination.” Now not only is your prayer not heard; it is abominable. I mean, that means that God actually takes sides over against your prayer. “God resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” God cannot bless disobedience. Now what the Word of God will do, if it is abiding in us, number one, it will control us. Number two: It will cleanse us. Look, if you will, here in, ah, verses 2-3: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away (that is, he just prunes it away): and every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Remember, the word *purge* here has the idea of cleansing, but it literally has the idea of pruning). “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Do you see it in verse 3? The Word of God is to control us. That means it abides in us. But not only is it to control us, it is to cleanse us. Now pruning is cutting away useless wood and branches. He cleanses us by clipping us. He has His shears and He’s constantly clipping. Now what tool does He use to cleanse us? Verse 3 again, or verse 2 again. “You are....” Verse 3: “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” You see, for the Word of God to abide in me, it means that the Word of God is constantly cleanses my heart, constantly clipping away the dead wood in my life. Why does God want to clip away the dead wood in my life? Why, when He sees a man or a woman, you or anybody else who’s serving the Lord, why does the Lord look at that person and say, “I want to get My word in that person, because if I get My word in that person, there’s certain things that are going to come out of his life.” They’re going to be pruned away out of his life and just cut away. Why? Do you know

what the, the bad wood does? It saps away the strength. It takes away the strength. And the more bad wood that you have in you, the more useless, ah, ah, what we call suckers, that there are in your life, the less fruit that you bear. And so the Lord takes the pruning knife. And the pruning knife is that sharp, two-edged sword, the Word of God. You are clean through the Word, and He begins to cut, and sometimes it hurts. But God doesn't want those things in my heart and in your heart, in my life and yours that, ah, are sapping our strength. Now, friend, these things don't have to be sinful things. They may be perfectly legitimate things, but they just take the strength. So He says, "They must go." Now God might let you have wealth if it will make you fruitful. But if it won't make you fruitful, God will clip it out. God might make, let you have health if it will make you fruitful. But if the health won't make you fruitful, He may purge you. God may let you have friends if those friends will enable you to be fruitful. But I want to tell you something, friend. Any possession that you have, any friend that you have, any activity that you have, no matter how good and how beautiful it may be, if it saps away your strength and keeps you from bearing fruit, the gardener has every right to clip it away and to purge it away through the Word of God. And it hurts to be pruned. And I imagine if a vine could talk, the vine would say, "Ouch, don't do that." I mean, that is a perfectly good, ah, branch. Look at it. Look at those green leaves. Look how pretty it is. But the gardener says, "I see no fruit on it. And, furthermore, I see no prospect of fruit from it. And I'm taking it out, that you might bear fruit." So the Lord looks at your life and my life and the Lord looks at every activity in my life, and the Lord doesn't ask, "Is it good or bad," in and of itself, but "Does it bear fruit?" Did you know that's the reason that you can keep some things in your life that I can't keep in my life? And I can keep some things in my life that you can't keep in your life? Because I might have something that bears fruit in my life, but for you it just saps your strength. I might have a friend that makes me a better Christian, but you might have a friend that saps away your strength in your life. And God says, "In your heart and in your life, that friend has to go." You may have some wealth that you can keep, but God may see to it that I have some wealth that I can't keep because that wealth may sap away my strength, where for you it will be a platform of service. And so I have to just simply say, "Lord, whatever it is, whatever it is." Now I want to tell you something, friend. You don't have to do the pruning. Here's the good and the bad part of it. I'll give you the good news first. You don't have to do the clipping. The reason is, the reason you don't have to do the clipping is, in the first place, you couldn't be trusted to do it. And you'd, you'd stir away from the sensitive spots. You see, ah, look, if you will. He says in verse 1: "...my Father is the husbandman." His shear is the Word of God. Now you're clean through the Word, but the Father is the husbandman. All you have to do is just open up your life to the Word of God. You read the Word.

II. God's Word Is Going to Cleanse You

The Word of God is going to come through you. It's going to cleanse you. Now that's, that's the good news. You don't have to do it. The bad news, which is really good news too, is He will do it. He will do it. And you might protest and you might say, "Why, that's a, that's a perfectly good branch. Ah, Lord, just leave it alone." But the Lord says, "Ah, I want it to go." Beautiful, yes. Leaves, yes. But it must go because it doesn't bear fruit. Now the third and final thing I want to say about the Word when the Word is in you. Not only will the Word control you. That is, it will be at home in your heart, not a stranger.

III. God's Word Will Communicate to You the Will of God

And not only will the Word cleanse you. But the Word of God will communicate to you the will of God. Now Jesus said, "If you ask anything, I will do it." Look, if you will, in verse 16 again. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Think about that. "...whatsoever ye may ask..." Look again in verse 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." How is that? How can the Lord make such a promise? Because we might ask all kinds of strange and weird things! Not if we're abiding in Him. Not if His Word is abiding in us, because, you see, when we abide in Him, the Spirit of God is in us. And when His Word abides in us, the will of God, the wisdom of God is in us. And the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and communicates to us what the Father wants. And so our will and His will is blended together. And, therefore, we can ask what we will, because what we will is what He wills. And we just have a life that can pray. I'm abiding in Him. That fruit is produced by Him. It is proof that I am in Him. It is permanent because of Him. His Word abides in me. It controls me. It cleanses me. It communicates to me the will of God. And, therefore, if I abide in Him, and He abide, His Word abides in me, then I can ask what I will and it will be done unto me.

Conclusion

Now, folks, let me tell you something about Bellevue Church. Bellevue Church right now is at the crossroads. We've said this, and it sounds like a cliché, but Bellevue Church is at the crossroad. We need a group of people in our church who know how to pray, get hold of God. We've been seeking the will of God, God's plan for us as a church, what we call Bellevue's Bold Breakthrough. We've had a committee, and that committee has been working, looking, searching, praying, planning. We feel that we ought to have enlarged facilities. We feel that we need a bigger box to put our blessings in. We feel that we need more room to teach Sunday school in, a bigger building so we can

continue to grow. This building, as you can see, is filled even on Sunday night, and it's becoming filled even on Wednesday night. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. We don't intend to stop growing. If we stop growing, we'll start dying. We don't want to be the only church that grows. We want others to grow. But if others are not growing, we still must grow. And we can't make ourselves sick to make them well. We are going to continue to grow as a church. We will grow and glow or we will dry and die. We will evangelize or we will fossilize. But we'll not stand still.

Now we must have God's will for us as a church. What does God want us to do? You have appointed, elected, confirmed, committees to seek the will of God. Those committees are the best leadership that I know of in our church. That doesn't mean that people who are not on these committees are not good people. But I tell you what. From what I know of Bellevue's leadership, these people represent people who love you, who love the Lord, who love the pastor, who love this church. We're seeking the will of God. We don't know all that God has for us. Don't think that the committee is dragging its feet. The committee is not dragging its feet. Here's a committee that is fasting, praying, I believe, seeking the face of God as to what God's will is. Where does God want us to build our new facility? What size should it be? Where should it be located? How much property should we acquire? What price should we pay for that property? All of these are big questions, good questions, reasonable questions. On the one hand, we don't want to try to save God money because He owns everything. On the other hand, we dare not be poor stewards of that which He's entrusted to us. So we, on the one hand, do not want to go out or, or fail to go out and do something because we're unwilling to pay the price, because what God commands us to do, God enables us to do. But on the other hand, we don't want to just forge ahead if God is not opening a door for us. So what does that mean? It means this, ladies and gentlemen, that we, as a church, must pray. That's what it means. You understand what I'm saying?

Now it's not rhetoric when I tell you we must pray. We must pray. And in order to pray, we must be on praying ground. And to be on praying ground, we must abide in Jesus and His Word must abide in us. And I want to call our church again to pray, and I mean serious prayer. And this is not a way to end a sermon. This is a plea from heaven through your pastor, that you seek the face of God, the will of God for our church, and that we'll say to the Lord, "Lord, whatever You want, we're willing to do." Now, obviously, we must have leadership. Obviously, we cannot all make a decision. When God gets ready to do something, God communicates His will through His leaders. That doesn't mean if His leaders don't know right now that they're out of the will of God. That doesn't mean that they haven't been working, playing, playing, praying and planning. But it does mean that we need to continue to wait on the Lord, to hold onto the Lord in fasting and in prayer.

So I want you to pray. I want you to join your pastor in fervently praying every day, every day, every day fervently praying, “Lord, guide Bellevue Church in whatever she ought to do.” And we’ll say to the Lord, “Lord, whatever it is that You say to us, we’ll do,” amen. “We’ll do. Be it big. Be it little. We’ll do it. If it something radically different than we’ve even thought of, we’ll do it. We just want to know Your will, dear Lord.” Now Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it will be done unto you.” Remember, remember, it is the life that prays. Are you on praying ground? If my heart is right, I can ask, even when I don’t know exactly what to ask for, and the Holy Spirit of God will take my prayer and apply it to the throne of heaven. But if my heart is not right, even the Holy Spirit of God cannot translate my prayer with intercession that cannot be uttered.

A Recipe for Joy

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 28, 1982

Main Scripture Text: John 15:11

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

JOHN 15:11

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Introduction

Now today we want to talk to you about the fullness of joy, how to have fullness of joy: “A Recipe for Joy.” And what is the recipe for joy? All right, John chapter 15—John chapter 15 and verse 11. Now we’ve been just coming right through the Gospel of John. Last week we were in John chapter 11, and today is the last in this series in the Gospel of John before we begin a brand new series, God willing, in the Book of Hebrews. But I want us to look in John chapter 15, verse 11—Jesus said to His disciples, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”* (John 15:11). Listen to it again: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* How to have fullness of joy: “A Recipe for Joy.”

Joy is the birthright of the child of God. Every child of God ought to have conscious joy. Every child of God ought to have conspicuous joy. Every child of God ought to have continuous joy. Every child of God ought to have contagious joy. Joy is the birthright of

the child of God. And if you're not living a life of joy, you're living beneath your privileges as a Christian. And it's so important that you have joy to win the lost. If you want people to believe in your Savior, dear friend, the mark of the authenticity of Christ in your life is the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They're not all that interested in your creed. They're not all that interested in your doctrines. They're not all that interested in your organizations. They want to know, is it working for you? And there's nothing more attractive in winning the lost to the Lord Jesus Christ than the joy of the Lord.

I don't want to be in a joyless church service. Now some people, you know, they think that when they get all sad and somber, that is dignified; but the problem with those people is they don't know the difference between dignity and rigor mortis. And it's dead—it's dead. *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"* (2 Corinthians 3:17), and there's that joy, and that peace, and that whatever it is that makes Jesus Christ real and shine out from us.

And not only is it the great strength in bringing the lost to Christ; but oh, dear friend, what a help, what a benefit, joy is serving the Lord! You know, the Psalmist said we're to *"Serve the LORD with gladness"* (Psalm 100:2). Now serving the Lord, like anything else can, make you tired physically. And I've said before, sometimes I get tired in the work, but I never get tired of the work. And the reason why is the joy of the Lord. For the Bible says, *"The joy of the LORD is your strength"*—*"The joy of the LORD is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10). Oh, I just feel sorry for somebody who tries to carry the burdens and the load of this life and they don't have that joy to put a spring to a step, to put a beat in their heart, to put a smile on their face. Thank God for joy, real joy.

I heard about a lady who was in a prayer meeting one time, and there were not very many people in the prayer meeting; her church had met for prayer meeting, and there were just a handful there, and she was kind of whining and complaining and crying. And she said, "Now Lord, bless us while we met here to worship you and so many of our members are out there in the world having a good time."

Well, friend, I'm having a good time here today—I really am. And there's something about being here in God's house that gives me strength and that gives me joy. And a Christian without joy is a contradiction in terms. A joyless Christian, perhaps, has no right even to call himself a Christian; or if he is a Christian, he's certainly a Christian who is out of fellowship with the Lord and a Christian who is living beneath his or her privileges.

Now let's see what the Lord Jesus had to say therefore about joy. He says here in John chapter 15, verse 11, *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that you're joy might be full."*

I. The Source of This Joy

Now first of all, I want you to notice the source of this joy. Look, if you will: “These things have I written unto you, that my joy might remain in you.” Just underscore that phrase, “*my joy*.” Now the joy that you are to have as a Christian is the joy of Jesus. He says, “*my joy*,” not joy like His; you’re literally to have His joy. Jesus wants to take the joy that He has and place that joy in you. Now perhaps you’ve thought of Jesus only as a man of sorrows and you’ve never thought of Jesus as the Jesus of joy, but Jesus here in John 15, verse 11, speaks of His joy. And you know, the Bible says that we are to rejoice in the Lord, and in the Book of Hebrews, the first chapter, the Bible says concerning the Lord Jesus, that God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Hebrews 1:9). And do you know what the word *gladness* means? It’s a word literally in the original which means “to leap—to leap; to jump.”

Do you remember in the Scripture when Elizabeth, who was the mother of John the Baptist—and John the Baptist was a forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ—when Elizabeth came to greet Mary, and both of them had babies in their wombs? And the Bible says that the baby that was in Elizabeth’s womb leaped; it leapt for joy in the very presence of the Son of God. And that’s the same word that’s translated here in Hebrews chapter 1 that God hath anointed Jesus with the oil of “leaping.” It’s the same word.

Now what is the idea here? It is that the joy that Jesus has is so exuberant and so full that He is literally leaping for joy. He is jumping for joy. Don’t get the idea that Jesus is some pale, sanctimonious recluse. Jesus was a person whose life was full of joy, real joy. As a matter of fact, Jesus loved to go to parties. And then we think that in order for us to look religious we have to put on a face so long we could eat oatmeal out of a lead pipe. That’s not true—that’s not true.

Listen. Jesus went to parties. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding, as we studied here not long ago, when He changed water into wine. And I preached a sermon on that subject a long time ago, and I entitled it “Jesus, the Life of the Party,” because that’s exactly what He was. He brought life. He hasn’t come to bring death; He’s come to bring life. As we preached last week, Jesus didn’t say, “I’ve come to invite you to a funeral.” Jesus came to invite us to a feast—so much that His enemies called Him a winebibber and a glutton (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). He was not a winebibber. He was not a glutton. But I’m just simply saying there was something about Jesus Christ, there was such a joy about Him, there was such a reality about Him, they even accused Him of being on the frivolous side. Of course, He was not. But there was in Jesus a genuine, genuine, real joy. And if you don’t have that joy, you’re not like your Lord, for your Lord Jesus Christ is literally leaping with joy. And He spoke to His disciples that day about His joy. He is the source of joy.

Where’s joy going to be found? Is joy going to be found in money? Jay Gould, who is

one of the richest men who ever lived, said, “I am the most miserable man on earth.” Is it going to be found in pleasure? Lord Byron, that playboy of his day, wrote, “My days are in the yellow leaf; the canker and the grief are mine alone.” Is it going to be found in pleasure? Lord Byron didn’t find joy in pleasure. Is it going to be found in fame? Lord Beaconsfield, who had plenty of that, described his life in this way: that, “Youth [was] a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age a regret.” He had fame, but he didn’t have joy. Where is joy going to be found? Is it going to be found in unbelief? Voltaire, before he died, said, “I wish that I’d never been born.” He was an atheist.

No, joy is only in the Lord Jesus, and you’re going to find joy from Christ. He speaks of His joy. I’m not asking you to have your joy or get joy in things, but only from the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to rejoice in the Lord. He is the source of our joy.

You’re in John 15—turn to John 17 and look in verse 13 for a moment. You see the same thought. Jesus is praying for us and He says, “*And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves*” (John 17:13). Isn’t that a beautiful verse? “*That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*”

You are to have joy and it is the joy that comes from Christ. Somebody wrote these words:

*A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double;
And this is life! (Paul Laurence Dunbar)*

Not if you know Jesus, friend—not if you know Jesus, not if you know the Christ who said in John 10, verse 10, “I’ve come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The source of this life is Christ; the source of this joy is Christ.

II. The Stability of This Joy

Secondly, I want you to notice not only the source of this joy, but I want you to notice the stability of this joy. Look again in John 15, verse 11: “*These things have I [written] unto you, that my joy*”—what’s that next word?—“*might remain...*”—“*that my joy might remain in you.*” This is not a joy that comes and goes; this is a joy that is constant joy. That’s the reason why I said not only do you need conspicuous joy: you need continual joy; you need constant joy; you need joy like a river. And a river just flows and flows and flows, and you’re never to be without this joy.

The Bible says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always:*”—always—“*and again I say, Rejoice*” (Philippians 4:4). We’re to have joy day in and day out—always.

You know, we used to think that the shortest verse in the Bible was in John 11:35:

“Jesus wept.” How many of you used to, when beginners, primaries—we used to call them beginners, and now they’re called something else—and intermediates—you know, now they call them youth, or whatever, but when we were back there, that’s what we called them, and we used to have to do memory verses. Boy, we all headed for John 11. We could get that one: *“Jesus wept.”* How many of you...? “Oh, I know my memory verse, *“Jesus wept,”* because we thought that was the shortest verse in the Bible.

But in the Greek, actually, that’s not two words; it’s three words. The shortest verse in the Greek is not in John 11. The shortest verse is 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 16. And do you know what it says? *“Rejoice evermore”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Now in the Greek, that’s just two words, *“Rejoice evermore,”* that we are to continue it; that is the shortest verse with the longest meaning. Not just “rejoice,” but *“Rejoice evermore”*—“just keep on rejoicing.” Jesus says here “that your joy might remain,” that this joy is with you. It doesn’t fade. It doesn’t leave you; it’s going to be there.

Now I’m not talking about that you have to go around constantly with a smile on your face.

I was reading the other day about a little girl who lives in Winnipeg, Canada, and she entered a contest; really she wanted to see how long she could smile, she wanted to break the Guinness Book of World Records, and so she smiled as long as she could smile. The previous record in the Guinness Book of World Records was 7 hours and 32 minutes. Someone had held a smile for 7 hours and 32 minutes, and this little girl, Lisa Lester, was able to smile for 10 hours and 5 minutes.

But friend, there’s a difference between joy and smiling. You can smile, perhaps, for 10 hours and 5 minutes, and then that smile will leave your face. But I want to tell you, even when the tears are coursing down your cheeks, there can be joy in your heart. This is the joy that will never leave you. Jesus Christ was facing the cross when He spoke of His joy, and He said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.”*

Now why does it remain? Well, you see, the constancy of your joy is linked to the source of your joy. If the source of your joy is in things, when those things fail you, then your joy is going to fail you. Now if the source of your joy is external, then it will not be constant. For example, if you get your joy out of amusement, when you can no longer be amused, then your joy is gone. If you get your joy out of your business, and your business fails, then your joy is gone. If you get your joy from your health, and your health fails, then your joy is gone. If you get your joy from your family... And there’s nothing wrong in getting your joy from your business, your health, your family; that’s all fine. They all have their place.

The Bible says, *“Rejoice with the wife of thy youth”* (Proverbs 5:18). But how about when your wife goes to heaven, your wife is taken from you? Now what about if your

family breaks up? Does that mean that your joy can be taken? Well, if that's the only place you are getting your joy, then your joy is gone; that's gone, then your joy is gone. But you see, Jesus never changes. Jesus is always there, and that is the reason that your joy can remain. Your joy can be steadfast, and nothing can take it away.

A. It Is Steadfast in Sorrow

Now for example, we are going to have sorrow. Don't think that when I'm talking about being a joyful Christian, you aren't going to have sorrow. Jesus, who was the Jesus of joy, was also the man of sorrow. There is no contradiction there. I have some sorrow in my heart right now over somebody that I love very much, who is going against the things of God, but I have joy. There's no contradiction. The Bible says in Isaiah 61:3 that God gives us *"the oil of joy for mourning"* (Isaiah 61:3). That means in the time of mourning, in the time of broken-heartedness, that God just pours in the oil of His joy. And Jesus said here in John 16—turn to John 16:20 and look at it: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice:"*—now watch it—*"and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy"* (John 16:20). Isn't that wonderful?

B. It Is Triumphant in Tribulation

What I'm trying to say is that this joy—this joy—that Jesus gives is steadfast in sorrow. But not only is it steadfast in sorrow; it is triumphant in tribulation. Not only are you going to have sorrow; you are going to have tribulation. I mean it's tough. But Jesus said, *"In this world, you shall have tribulation"* (John 16:33). But let me tell you what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4. He said, *"I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations"*—*"I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."* So you are having tribulations. You say, *"How do you expect me to be joyful, going through what I'm going through?"*

You are like that little old lady who said, *"If God gave me tribulations, then I think He expects me to tribulate."* And so you just tribulate.

Well, Paul said, *"I am joyful."* He said, *"I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."* This is the same Paul that sang praises to God at midnight in the Philippian jail with rats and vermin and sewage on the floor. At midnight he is singing praises unto God. Be joyful in tribulation.

C. It Is Abundant in Affliction

So this joy—I'm talking about this steadfastness of this joy, the stability of this joy. I'm saying it's steadfast in sorrow. I'm saying that it is triumphant in tribulation. I'm saying that it is abundant in affliction. Let me give you another verse—1 Thessalonians 1:6—and this is what Paul said: *"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word"*—now watch it—*"in much affliction, with joy of the Holy [Spirit]."* You

have some affliction, okay. But there is also the joy. It is steadfast in sorrow. It is triumphant in tribulation. It is, ladies and gentlemen, abundant in affliction.

Listen to it again: *“Having received the word in much affliction, with joy.”* The afflictions may come, the afflictions may go; but Jesus is still there. And if you get your joy from Jesus, then your afflictions are not going to take away your joy. I’m not saying that the afflictions are good. I’m not trying to minimize the afflictions. I’m not trying to minimize your bereavement. I’m not trying to minimize the things that people have done to you.

Joe Scriven came from Ireland, Joe Scriven, to be a missionary to the Iroquois Indians over 100 years ago, and he loved God with a full heart, loved God, I suppose, as much as anybody in this room loved the Lord. He left his fiancée in Ireland; she was a beautiful lass. He loved her so much; they were going to get married. Finally, she sailed across the ocean and met this young missionary. They were planning their wedding, but shortly before the wedding she was killed in a tragic accident. And here was a man that loved God. He had to bury his fiancée with his own hands.

Later on, he wrote a letter home to his mother; a year later, he wrote these words—we love to sing them:

*What a Friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer. (Joseph M. Scriven)*

That’s exactly what Paul had learned to do.

D. It Is Lasting in Losses

Not only, dear friend, was it triumphant in tribulation; but I want to tell you that it was lasting in losses. This joy—let me give you another verse: Hebrews chapter 10, verse 34: *“For ye...took joyfully the spoiling of your goods”* (Hebrews 10:34). How many of you right now are in a business that’s failing? Some of our contractors are having businesses that are folding up because of the high interest rates. Some of you right now are out of work, some of you have been laid off, and the joy is gone out of your life. Do you know why? Because you were getting your joy from your job. I’m not saying it’s easy to be laid off. I’m not saying it’s easy to see a business fold up in front of you. I’m

not saying it's easy to see your goods go. But listen to what the Bible says here in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 34: *"Ye...took joyfully the spoiling of your goods."*

Why? Because we have treasure laid up in heaven; we have a treasure that this world cannot spoil. And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that if you get your joy in anything else other than the Lord Jesus Christ, when something happens to that thing, your joy is going to go. But nothing is going to happen to Jesus, and the joy that you have is to be received from Christ—that His joy might be in you, and therefore, that your joy might remain.

III. The Sufficiency of This Joy

Now I want you to notice something else. Not only the source of that joy, and not only the stability of that joy, but let's read it again: *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."* I want you to think about the sufficiency of that joy. Full joy, all that you need, is in the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 16, verse 11, is a good one. Listen to this: *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore"* (Psalm 16:11). Isn't that a wonderful verse? Listen to it again: *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."* Or 1 Peter 1:8 speaks of those of us who *"rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."* Jesus said, *"that your joy might be full."*

Now you see, these other things can give you joy in one area of your life, but unless you have joy in Jesus, your joy is not full. You get joy in money—your joy is not full. You get joy in friends—your joy is not full. You get joy in family—your joy is not full. You get joy in fame—your joy is not full. Only fullness of joy is found in Christ. You see, let me tell you about Jesus. Not only is Jesus necessary; Jesus is enough—Jesus is enough.

People are always searching; they don't know what they're looking for. I heard about a man who used to who played the cello, and rather than moving his fingers up and down, he just put it in one spot, and kept sawing like this, and never moved his fingers. Somebody said to him, "Why don't you move your fingers like everybody else does?" He said, "They are looking for it. I've found it."

Well, I want to tell you something, friend. People are looking for something that I have found, and that you have found, and anybody has found who has found the Lord Jesus Christ. Fullness of joy is only in Christ—in Christ. *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."* St. Augustine put it well when he said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee." And so there is, dear friend, the sufficiency of this joy. It is not just mere joy; it is fullness of joy.

IV. The Secret of This Joy

But now let us hasten on and look at this verse one more time—John 15, verse 11: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you”*—that’s the source of the joy—*“might remain”*; that’s the steadfastness of the joy—*“that your joy might be full”*; that’s the sufficiency of the joy. But now let’s spend just a few moments talking about the secret of this joy. Look, if you will again, in verse 11: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.”* “These things have I spoken in order that my joy might be in you.” Now if you want His joy in you, then you’re going to have to see what’s He’s spoken. You’re going to have to see what He said. It all hinges on that.

You see, not every Christian has joy. You can be a Christian and be miserable. As a matter of fact, I’ve said it before; I want to say it again: *The most miserable man on earth is not an unsaved man. The most miserable man on earth is a saved man out of fellowship with God.* Amen?

You see, Peter there, after he cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus, the Bible says he *“went out, and wept bitterly”* (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:62). He was saved, but he certainly wasn’t full of joy. Oh, David, after he had committed his sin, he lost his joy. And he prayed in Psalm 51:12, *“[Lord], restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.”* He didn’t say, “Lord, I want you to give me my salvation back.” He never lost it. But he lost the joy of it.

So what is the secret of joy? Many Christians are joyless Christians. As I say, it’s almost a contradiction in terms, but it is possible that you could be here today without joy, and yet on your way to heaven, going second-class. All right, what is the secret of this joy? Well, He says in verse 11, *“These things have I spoken unto you.”* Well, let’s back up and see what He said. Look, if you will, in chapter 15, verse 1. He says, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman”* (John 15:1).

Now what He means by that is, “My life is like a grapevine. My Father is like the tender of the vineyard. He’s the keeper of the vine.” And then verse 5—Jesus says, *“I am the vine; ye are the branches”* (John 15:5). Now He’s using an analogy. He’s using a figure of speech. He’s using something that those people of that day who had their vineyards could understand. He is saying that, “My relationship to you and your relationship to me is to be the relationship of a branch and a vine.”

Now having said that, I want you to know three things about the life of a branch and a vine that are necessary for you to understand in order that you might have joy.

A. Absolute Dependence

In the first place, you see, a branch is absolutely dependent upon a vine. If you cut the branch from the vine, it withers; it’s good for nothing but to be cast in a fire and burned.

You see, we do not understand just how dependent we are upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Look again in verse 5: *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit”*—now notice this next phrase. Look at it—*“for without me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:5). “Oh,” you say, “yes, I can.” No, you can’t. You say, “Yes, I can.” That’s your opinion. But you see, what you think is something, He says is nothing. That is, all of these great vaunted plans and schemes and all of this, He calls it nothing. It’s going up in smoke. You know what nothing is? That’s a zero with the edges trimmed off. Nothing—nothing: *“Without me ye can do nothing.”* You see, we must depend upon Him. Do you depend upon Him totally, absolutely?

B. Complete Restfulness

But you see, when you depend upon Him, then you rest in Him. Once you are committed to Him, totally dependent upon Him, then all that you need is necessary for Him to supply.

Where does that little branch, where does it get its necessities, its needs? From the vine. It has no other source, so it must cling to the vine. And so as I’ve said before when we preached on this, if you were to carry on a conversation with a little branch and say, “Little branch, how are you doing today?” “Fine, thank you. You don’t look like you’re doing so good, though.” “Well, I’m not.” “Little branch, what’s your secret?” “Well,” he says, “I’m just resting in the vine. I don’t have any other worries; I don’t have any other concerns. My one concern is to stay abiding in that vine.” “But you have some needs.” “Oh, I know I have the needs, but that’s not my responsibility. It’s my response to His ability. I just abide in the vine. And when I need water to cool my tongue, I don’t worry about where I’m going to get it. The vine sends His roots down into the ground and searches for water, and brings it to me. And when I need buds and leaves, I don’t worry where I’m going to get them. I just abide in the vine, and the leaves and the buds appear. And when it’s the fall of the year and I need fruit, I don’t worry about how much, what kind, how sweet, what size—that’s not my business. You see, sir, I don’t produce the fruit. All I do is bear the fruit.” Amen?

You see, we’re not called on to do anything for God. You ever see a branch thrashing around, groaning and straining? “Say, what are you doing?” “Oh, I’m trying to produce some grapes.” No, no, no!—he doesn’t have to do that. Just abide in the vine. It is the vine that produces the grapes. The branch bears the grapes, and we are to bear fruit.

And incidentally, what is the fruit? Look, look, look! *“The fruit of the Spirit is love”*—what’s the next word?—*“joy”* (Galatians 5:22). See, we’re talking about joy. See, that’s what Jesus said: “that my joy might be in you.” Well, how does His joy get out of Him and into me? As I am in union and communion with Him, as my life is blended with His,

and His life infuses my life, and just as the sap flows from the vine into the branch, the life of Jesus Christ, as I abide in Him, flows into me, and so *de facto* there is the fruit which is the joy, which is His joy, which is in me. And all that I need I receive from Him.

C. Ultimate Surrender

And so you see, when there's this absolute dependence, then there's this complete restfulness. But wait a minute. In order for there to be this dependence and this restfulness, there must be ultimate surrender. I mean, a branch doesn't have any side issues; it exists for just one thing. You say, "Well, wait a minute. Don't tell me to exist for one thing. I'm a businessman. I'm a family man. I've got sports. I've got this. I've got that." Ladies and gentlemen, you are to say, if you would be a successful Christian, "*This one thing I do*" (Philippians 3:13). You know, the Bible says, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*" (James 1:8). Do you know the Bible says, "*This one thing I do*"? Do you know the Bible says, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*"? Do you know the Bible says, "If your eye be single, then your body is full of life" (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34)?

Have you ever brought all of the issues of life into one burning focus and you say, "I have no greater ambition, no greater zeal, no greater desire, no greater responsibility, than just to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ"? Now a branch may do some other things. It may curl around the post, it may show some leaves, it may bear some fruit, it may do some other things; but it has one concern, and that is to abide in the vine. And these other things happen because it has reduced its concern to one concern. That's not going to make you a worse father or a worse mother, a worse businessman; it'll make you a better mother, a better father, a better businessman. But I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that you have to come to the place where you say, "This one thing I do."

There is a total ultimate surrender of a branch to the vine. The branch does not exist for anything else; it exists for the vine. You are not your own. You're "*bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:20). You belong to Him just exactly as a branch belongs to a vine. Now then when you start seeing your life in that relationship, and when you start abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ that way, you're going to find in your heart a miraculous joy, because the joy of Christ, which is the life of Christ, it's going to be flowing out of Christ and into you when you make that ultimate surrender.

F. B. Meyer was a great preacher. He lived a few generations ago. He was a man whose life has blessed my life by his writings—the things that I've read, and so forth. F. B. Meyer, however, always the saintly man that he came to be, as a matter of fact, he had an intense struggle in his heart and in his life. He didn't have the peace and the joy. And he wrote about it. And I want to share with you what F. B. Meyer said. He said

there came to his church on one occasion a young man to preach; he was a guest preacher. And there was such a fullness of joy in that young man's life, such an effulgence in his face, such a spark of life, such a spontaneity, such a peace with God, such a joy like a river that was flowing in the heart and life of that young man, that when F. B. Meyer looked at his own life, he realized that young man had something that he did not have and that he desperate needed. He decided he would talk with the young man about it.

They met that night and they talked it over; or at least they met the next morning, he said, at seven, and talked it over. And he said to the young man, "Would you mind telling me the secret of your joy?" And the young man looked at F. B. Meyer and said, "I want to ask you a question. Have you given to Jesus Christ everything?" And F. B. Meyer said, "Well, yes, in a general way, I have." He said, "No, have you given to Jesus Christ everything?" It went like a dart to his spirit. He could not get it out of his heart, out of his mind. All day long he thought about it. That night he went into his room, F. B. Meyer did, locked the door behind him, and purposed that he would not come out of that room until he had the joy of the Lord in his heart.

And he started to wrestle with the Lord and to agonize with the Lord. And as he prayed and tried to give to God everything, he said he carried around with him a ring of keys in his pocket similar to this ring of keys. And he said that it seemed as though the Lord would have him take that ring of keys out of his pocket to symbolize the things that he was giving to the Lord, and he just turned them over one at a time, and he said, "Now Lord, I give you the key to this part of my life, and Lord, I give you the key to this part of my life, and Lord, I give you the key to this part of my life, and to this part, and to this part, and to this part." But he said there was one little key that he took off to just a small cabinet, saying to himself, "The Lord doesn't need that one; He doesn't want that one."

Then he said it seemed as though the Lord said to him, "Have you given me all the keys?" "Well," he said, "yes, Lord, I've given you all the keys, well Lord, except for one small key that's really not of much consequence." The Lord held out His hand and said, "My son, the key." And the devil whispered in F. B. Meyer's ear and said, "Don't give it to Him. Don't do it. Don't give Him all the keys. If you give Him everything, there is no telling what He might ask you to do. Don't give it to Him." And F. B. Meyer toddled that thing in his heart and in his life, that unclean thing, that habit—whatever it was he never said—but something that was there that was not completely, totally yielded, and something he was not free or willing to let go of.

And finally he said to the Lord, "Lord God, I'm so weak I don't even know whether I can give it to you or not; but here it is, Lord. Take it." He said, "The Lord gently opened his fingers and took that key and went straight to that closet in his mind and opened that

cabinet. And,” he said, “when he did, he was appalled at the filthiness and the dirt and the selfishness and the rebellion that was there in that small cabinet that he pictured in his mind. The Lord went in and cleaned it all out.” F. B. Meyer said, “That night I felt a cleanness, I felt a freshness, a relationship that I’d never known. And,” he said, “as I awakened the next morning,” he said, “it was not a matter of shouting, it was not a matter of leaping or dancing, but just a sweet spirit, just the presence of the Lord. And,” he said, “all day long I said to myself, ‘I must have said it a hundred times: I’m His, I’m His, I am completely His,’ and there was the joy of the Lord.”

Conclusion

Now let me tell you something, friend. Jesus said, “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*” What had He spoken? He says that we are to be to Him like a branch is to a vine. We are to abide in Him, we are to rest in Him, we are to draw our strength from Him, we are to be totally, totally committed to Jesus Christ—and that is joy. And may I say that, without that joy, I don’t care what else you have, where else you may go, what else you may achieve; without that joy—and you’ll agree that it is true—your life is meaningless; without that joy—no matter what else you have, no matter what else you do—without that joy, your life is meaningless. And that joy is in Christ: His joy in you. †

Fullness of Joy

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 20, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 15:11

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

JOHN 15:11

Outline

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- III. The Sufficient Supply of This Joy
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Introduction

You know, dear friends, if I were to ask you to open your Bibles to John chapters fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen—if your Bible student—right away you'd know that you're in the heart of treasure land. What a blessing in any of these chapters we call this the upper room discourse and here the Lord Jesus Christ is revealing to us His tremendous spiritual gems. Would you take your Bibles and open today to John chapter fifteen and I want us to look at one specific verse and then we're going to look at quite a few others. But, John chapter fifteen and we're going to look at verse eleven. John chapter fifteen and verse eleven. And, Jesus said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”* (John 15:11). I want to talk to you today on this subject, fullness of joy.

Now, God's plan for you, are you listening, is that you have joy. But, not ordinary joy, He wants you to have full joy, constant joy, conspicuous joy, and contagious joy. God's plan is that you have fullness of joy. Now, if you're saved and you don't have joy, there's something very wrong. A joyless Christian is a contradiction in terms. God has intended that you have joy consistently, for the Bible says, *“Rejoice in the Lord always...”* (Philippians 4:4) and you're not to have inferior joy. You're to have joy unspeakable and

full of glory. I don't know everything about you, but this I know about you—you want joy. I know that about you. You want joy and it is God's plan that you have joy.

And, do you know how important joy is to the Christian life? Folks, first of all, joy is important in bringing people to Jesus Christ. Did you know the most attractive quality of our life in order to bring people to Jesus Christ is the joy that we have? The people that you work with, if they can see that joy in you, the people that you go to school with, the people that you worship with. That's the reason I want our services to be services that are marked by joy, enthusiasm, and happiness. I'm not talking about cheerleader enthusiasm. The real meaning of the word enthusiasm is in God, in *theos*. God in you and you in God and there ought to be that enthusiasm. And—by the way—if you worship without enthusiasm, don't you look down your nose at the drunkards or the cultists. You're doing more to hold back the power of God perhaps than He is.

We ought to worship the Lord with gladness. And, you see, listen, evangelism is as much caught as it is taught. Evangelism is in the handshake of the usher. You ushers try to look—not look like you know—mortician this morning. It's alright for a mortician to be a mortician there, but we haven't come to mourn a corpse today. We've come to hail a conqueror and His name is Jesus, alright. Evangelism is on the face on the choir. The very way that you sing when you sing if the radiance of Jesus and the joy of the Lord Jesus comes through you. My dear friend, evangelism is the way that you sing. You get an unsaved man and he comes to a church service. He doesn't want to come to begin with and you sing halfhearted. You sing lackadaisically like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm. He's going to look around and say, “Well, these folks don't believe that, but if you sing with a heart full of joy to the Lord Jesus Christ with the glory of Christ upon your face and the spirit of Jesus Christ in your heart he's going to say these folks believe that stuff.” And, before long he'll believe it also. I'm telling you dear friend, that the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ is necessary for evangelism.

I'm going to tell you something else. It is necessary for service. Do you know what keeps you going? The joy of the Lord. Do you know what gives you strength? The joy of the Lord. You say, “Adrian, do you ever get tired?” Sometimes I do, I really do, but I never get tired of the work. I just get tired in the work. I never get tired. Listen, I am as excited today about serving and pastoring this church and being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ as I've ever been in my life if I know my heart. I really am. I'm charged up about it, but sometimes I get tired. But, you want me to tell you what gives me strength. The joy of the Lord is my strength. That's what the scripture says. “...*the joy of the LORD is your strength*” (Nehemiah 8:10). You know there's a command in the Bible and it says this. “*Serve the Lord with*”—what?—“*gladness...*” (Psalm 100:2). Oh, how tedious and tasteless are the hours. There's nothing drier, there's nothing more debilitating, and there's nothing more repulsive than trying to do spiritual work without

the joy of the Lord. “Serve the Lord with gladness,” (Psalm 100:2) “the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). The apostle Peter said, “...with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). Somebody has said, “I don't know who said but I agree with him. A religion that wears grave clothes ought to be buried.” Amen.

Now, a joyless Christian is a contradiction in terms. We are to have joy and the Bible says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Philippians 4:4). Jesus said, “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*” (John 15:11). Now, as I've said before—I know this about you—you want joy and I'm going to give you an iron clad guarantee of how you can have joy. Not because I'm that smart—no—I'm going to tell you what Jesus said and He cannot lie. These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.

I. The Supernatural Source of This Joy

Now, first of all I want you to notice the supernatural source of this joy. Jesus here speaks of His. Look at it. “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you...*” (John 15:11). Now, the joy that you're to have today is not your joy. It is to be His joy. It is to be a supernatural joy. It is to be the joy of the Lord which is your strength, not your joy. Your joy is not your strength. It is the joy of the Lord that is your strength, that His joy might remain in you. That's the kind of joy that you're to have the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when you think of Jesus you think of a man of joy. So many times when we think of the Lord Jesus we think of a man of sorrow. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The Bible tells us of the tears of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, dear friend, when I'm talking about joy I do not mean a careless, carefree, and happy go lucky person. God forgives our dry eyes. God forgive us when we go without a burden, when we're not broken. The Lord Jesus was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was a man of tears—now pay attention—but do not think of Jesus Christ therefore as a pale, sanctimonious religious recluse. He was not. He's a man of joy. Jesus went to parties. As a matter of fact, in John chapter two, he was the life of the party. As a matter of fact, the Pharisees in whose hearts the milk of human kindness had curdled, the petrified Pharisees hated Jesus Christ and one of the reasons they hated Jesus Christ was His joy that made their barren, sterile religion so terrible in comparison to the life of joy that Jesus had.

Let me tell you, nobody ever had joy like Jesus. There is a prophetic Psalm concerning the Lord Jesus and this is what it says concerning Christ. The Lord “...*thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*” (Psalm 45:7). Think of it. The Lord “...*thy God, hath anointed thee*”—His Son, the Messiah—“*with the oil of*

gladness above thy fellows” (Psalm 45:7). That means this. That nobody ever had the kind of joy that Jesus had. His joy is greater than all of the sons of men. The Lord “...*thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*” (Psalm 45:7).

Do you know one of the great proofs that Jesus was a man of joy? I'll tell you what it was. Little children wanted to come and sit on His lap. Little children loved Him. He was not negative. He was not sour. He was not grumpy and trumpy like some of us. He had a warm, loving laughter, a personality, winsomeness, gentleness, and a genuine joy that caused others to want to be attracted to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, so listen, look, you're in John fifteen. Just turn to John seventeen. Let me show you a verse of scripture. Look over here if you will in John seventeen and verse thirteen. “*And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves*” (John 17:13). Again He says, “that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13). Jesus is the supernatural source of this joy.

When I'm talking today about the life of joy I am talking to you about a supernatural joy. The joy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same joy that God the Father gave to the Lord Jesus because God the Son would abide in God the Father is the same joy that God wants to give to us today. Do you have that kind of joy? Is there in your heart and in your life a supernatural joy?

II. The Steadfast Stability of This Joy

Now, the second thing I want to say. I want you to notice not only the supernatural quality of this joy—the supernatural source—but I want you to notice that I am going to call the steadfast stability of this joy. Look again if you will please at verse eleven. John fifteen verse eleven, “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain...*” (John 15:11). Now, folks, some of us get joy in other places and in other things and there's nothing wrong with that because the Bible says, “...*God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Timothy 6:17). You can get joy in family. You can get joy in health. You can get joy in achievement. You can get joy in service. You can get joy in love ones. You can get joy in many things, but dear friend, that joy is not always fatal. Do you know why? Because those things could be taken away from you, right? You get your joy in your health and your health will go sooner or later. You get your joy in companions and they'll leave you sooner or later. You see, you're going to the graveside. Either they're going to bury you or you're going to bury your loved ones. You say that's morbid. Not necessarily, not if you know Jesus, it's not morbid. It may be a graduation to glory. It may be glorious. But, you see dear friend, listen, if you depend upon those things then your joy can change. You see, the stability of your joy is no greater than the source of your joy. You get your joy in money, well that can change. Somebody said, “Money talks, it says goodbye.” And, if that's where you get your joy

then perhaps when your money goes your joy is going to go.

But, you see, Jesus said, "...*that my joy might remain in you...*" (John 15:11). Why does it remain? I'll tell you why it remains. Listen. Because He's the source of it and Jesus never changes. Amen. He never fails. He never changes and therefore circumstances cannot take away this joy. I want to give you a Bible quiz, don't answer out loud, but think about it. What were the circumstances when Jesus gave us John chapter fifteen? What episode, what part of His life, where was He, what was He facing? I'll tell you what he was facing, dark Gethsemane and cruel Golgotha. He was about to go to the cross. He anticipated that He would be ignominiously spat upon, misused, and abused. He was going to be whipped. He was going to be beaten. He was going to be nailed up as quivering flesh upon that cross. He knew all of the horrors of Calvary, there facing the cross He spoke of God.

Do you see the constancy of that joy? Nothing could take it away, even a crucifixion. Do you want that kind of guy? *When I was a boy being raised on the East Coast of Florida I really anticipated the hurricanes. I loved to see the hurricanes come because they were exciting. When they would say a hurricane was coming my brother—who was older than I—and myself got very excited. We loved to go to the ocean. We lived not too far from the ocean. We'd go to the ocean because we loved to see the ocean begin to swell and heave. We'd see waves like we'd not seen for a long time. Waves that were only five feet high or six feet high became twenty and thirty feet high. And, great big waves would come crushing and crashing in and there would be that foam and that fume. You could just lean in the wind and taste the salt air. That old ocean would be sieving, surging, heaving, booming, and crashing. Of course, Mama made us come in before the storm got too bad, but what an excitement to go over there just to the threshold of one of those great hurricanes and to see that ocean sieve.*

But, you know what dear friend? If you were to go out into the middle of that Atlantic Ocean with that storm of its surface and go down just fifty feet it would be smooth as a millpond. It would be completely unroughed. That storm only touched the surface of that great ocean and there are storms of life that come to us. There are sickness, sorrow, troubles, tribulation, disappointment, and grief. Friend I don't minimize them, they are real. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but I want you to know that down deep in his spirit was "...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding..." (Philippians 4:7) and of joy that was so real that facing the cross He could speak about His joy.

Now, you pay attention to me folks. It's just a matter of time until you're going to need this kind of joy. And, a matter of fact, if you realize it you need it right now. But, one of these days you're going to really need it because your Gethsemane may come, your Calvary may come, your heartache may come, your anguish may come and then

the joy of the Lord will be your strength. Now, see, look, I'm talking about the supernatural source of this joy, it comes from Jesus. I'm talking about the steadfast stability of this joy that it might remain.

III. The Sufficient Supply of This Joy

And, I want to talk to you about something else. I want to talk to you about the sufficient supply of this joy. Notice that He says that my joy might be in you and therefore that your joy will be full. The Bible says, “...*at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*” (Psalm 16:11). Fullness of pleasure. Now, you can get joy from anything. I get joy from things. You know, the Bible says, “...*God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy...*” (1 Timothy 6:17). I get joy from preaching. Sometimes people tell me after a sermon, “I enjoyed that sermon.” I say, “I did too.” I get joy from preaching. I do. Hey, I get joy from the good things of life, for food and clothes and a house. God gives all things richly to enjoy.

Do you think that God made all that for the devil's crowd? Cause He loves His children. That's alright, I enjoy my grandchildren and every now and then I even enjoy my children. I enjoy my grandchildren—but now you listen to me, you pay attention to me now—all of these things can change. If I depend upon these things or even if I can keep these things they'll give me joy but they can never give me full joy. You see, there's a spiritual dimension of me. I am so wide. I am so created that I have in me a God shape vacuum. St. Augustine has said, “*O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.*” You'll never have the joy that you ought to have, fullness of joy. Even though you may get joy in many things there will be a missing dimension. You will never know the fullness of joy until you know 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 it is found. Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.

Listen folks, Jesus said, “I've come that you might have fullness of joy.” There's what I want to call the sufficiency of the supply, nothing like Him when you have His joy.

IV. The Sublime Secret of This Joy

But, the fourth and final thing I want to talk to you about today is the most important thing. I mean, because right up to now I have shown you a need, but now I want to show you how to get your hands on it, how is that need mediated to you. How does that joy come to you? The key is also found in John fifteen, verse eleven, the text that we started with. Listen to it. “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*” (John 15:11). Jesus said, “I just told you something that is the secret of joy.”

Now, not only the sufficient supply, but the sublime secret, there is a secret right here and the secret lies in what Jesus has just said. Jesus said something and then Jesus said, “that you might have my kind of joy” (John 15:11). Alright, what did He say that's vital to understand this? In this fifteenth chapter of John is the story of vine, the grapevine, and the branches. And, in the fifteenth chapter of John Jesus is giving an illustration—a parable as it was—and Jesus said, “*I am the vine, ye are the branches ...*” (John 15:5) in that vine.

Hey folks—listen—there was never a better teacher than Jesus Christ. The Bible says of Jesus Christ that, “...*the common people heard him gladly*” (Mark 12:37). He could be understood. Every now and then Dr. Smell Fungus, Dr. Sounding Brass, and Dr. Tinkling Cymbal will stand up and preach and you don't understand it. You say, “Oh, he must be brilliant, I didn't understand him.” Don't kid yourself friend. Jesus is brilliant, but the common people heard him gladly. Just because a river is muddy doesn't mean its deep. Amen. Jesus took the simplest thing and He gave a tremendously profound truth. There's a branch abiding in a vine and Jesus said to those people standing around, “*I am the vine, ye are the branches...*” (John 15:5) this is the secret of joy. I'll tell you why, friend. All that the branch needs, the vine already has, right? And, all that the vine has is available to the branch if the branch will do but one thing. That is abide in that vine. And, Jesus said, “if you'll learn that, you'll learn the secret of constant, conspicuous, contagious joy.”

Alright now, what does that mean to abide? Well, pay attention. First of all—and I hope you'll just jot these thoughts down—if you want this joy you must come absolutely to God yourself. You must realize that in you—you do not have what it takes.

A. **We Must Be Relying on His Strength**

There must be a complete reliance upon his strength. Now, Jesus says here in John chapter fifteen and verse five, “*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*—Now, notice what else He says—“*for without me ye can do*”—hey what's that next word? Let's say it out loud. What is it?—“*nothing*” (John 15:5).

Now, you know what most of us think? I tell you what most of us think. We could do more with Jesus. That's what most of us think really. We could do more with Jesus, but Jesus said without me you can't do anything. And, I've already told you, “nothing” (John 15:5) that's a zero with the edges knocked off. “Nothing” (John 15:5). Well, you say, “I can do plenty without Jesus.” May I say dear friend—respectfully—that's your opinion. But, in the white light of eternity, it'll be nothing. It will amount to nothing. Your business, your education, your kind deeds, and your altruism are all of nothing without Jesus Christ. You see, what can a branch do without a vine? Now, think about it. You see,

how logically He is. Suppose you take a branch and you cut it off and He is talking about a grape branch. Suppose you cut that branch off from the vine, now what can you do with it and what can it do? "It's good for nothing except to be burned" (John 15:6) He says in verse six. Did you know that you can't carve it, you can't make furniture out of it, Rabbinic law said, "You couldn't even burn it for the temple sacrifice because it didn't even make a good fire." It's not good even for fuel; just to burn it. Without me, you can do nothing.

Friend, as long as I think I'm something Jesus Christ is not everything and He never becomes everything until I'm willing to become nothing "...*without me ye can do nothing*" (John 15:5). Do you know the reason many of us don't have this joy? We've never come to that place. We have never really realized our total complete dependence upon Jesus Christ. There must be number one, this awareness of our total inability that I'm going to call reliance upon His strength.

B. We Must Be Feeding on His Word

Number two, not only dear friend must there be reliance upon His strength, but day by day we must be feeding on His Word. What does it mean to abide in him? Look in verse seven: "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*" (John 15:7).

Now, how do we get this down to the real life in which we live because that sounds so nebulous, so esoteric, how are we going to abide in Him? Well friend, listen, it's not a bit nebulous. It's very plain and simple. To abide in Him is to let His Word abide in you. You see, listen, I said that all that the vine has is available to the branch and all the branch needs the vine has. Well, what is it then? It is the life of the vine that flows into the branch. It's that sustenance, that sap, that life, that juice, and that vitality that is in that vine flows into the branch. Now, what is that vitality? What is that like? What is that substance? Can you nail it down? Can you make it even more plain? Can you make it even more clear? I can. You're in John fifteen. Turn to John chapter six and verse sixty-three and look with me for just a moment. I mentioned this verse to you a few Wednesday nights ago in prayer meeting. John chapter six and verse sixty-three: "*It is the spirit that quickeneth*"—the word quickeneth means makes alive—"*the flesh profiteth nothing*"—it reminds us again without me you can do nothing. And, now notice this—"*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63).

Now, God's life is in His Word. Pay attention now. Jesus and the Bible are not synonymous, but Jesus and the Bible are inseparable. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life and God gave the same word to the Bible that He gave to His Son, The Word of God. Now, go back to John chapter fifteen, verse seven and look at it again. Jesus said, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you*" (John 15:7).

Now, let's put it this way, "If you abide in me and my life abides in you" (John 15:7) that's saying the same thing because His Word is the way that His life is mediated to us. You see, is the life of the branch that comes into the vine and Jesus said, "abide in my words" (John 15:7). Jesus said, "the word that I speak to you, it is spirit, it is life," (John 6:63) and the life of God comes through His Word to you.

Do you want me to tell you why many of you don't have joy? You don't feed on The Word of God. You're not abiding in The Word of God. God's Word is not coming into you to vitalize you and you don't have life, therefore you don't have joy. You see, sometimes the answer is right on the surface. Sometimes people come to a pastor to counsel and say, "Pastor, I just don't understand it. Everybody is talking about all this joy. I don't have joy pastor. I just don't have any happiness. I just don't know what's wrong with me." They expect the pastor to wrinkle his brow, stroke his chin, and give them some deep meaning. They kind of feel like the man that went to the doctor and he didn't want to go to work. He wouldn't do things around the house, he'd just sit around all day long, he didn't seem to have any energy, and he couldn't get anything done. Finally his wife sent him to the doctor. The doctor examined him and he said to the doctor, "Alright doctor, I'm a grown man," he said, "don't beat around the bush, and put it to me straight. What's wrong with me?" The Doctor said, "All right I'll tell you if you want it straight. You're lazy and that's what's wrong with you."

Now, folks, there are a lot of people who want to come to the pastor and say, "Oh pastor, what's wrong? Why don't I have any spiritual life? Why don't I have any joy?" I'll tell you dear friend, it may be very simple and you may not need a doctor or a pastor to tell you. You're not feeding on The Word of God. Jesus said, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*" (John 15:7).

C. We Must Be Obeying His Commandments

Number one is to rely upon His strength. Number two is to receive His Word. Number three is to begin to obey Him.

Look if you will now in John chapter fifteen. What good is it to receive His Word if you don't obey His Word? Look in John fifteen, verse ten: "*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*" (John 15:10–11). Now, folks, a lot of us like the promises and we recite the promises, but we don't like to obey the commandments. Why do you receive The Word? To see what The Word says so that you can obey The Word. I want to remind you what I told you on another occasion. And, I hope you'll never forget this. You do not know God through Bible study, you know

about God by Bible study. You know God through obedience. You do not know God by studying the Bible. You know God by obeying the Bible. Jesus said if you know these things happy are ye if you do them, joyful are ye if you do them. *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them”*—Jesus said—*“he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”*. and make our abode with him.—Jesus said—*“and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

Do you want Jesus Christ to be real to you? Do you want Jesus Christ to become a bright and living reality in your life? Obey him. *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me”* (John 14:21). That's what he said here. Look again in John chapter fifteen and verse ten. *“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love”*—and then verse eleven—*“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you...”* (John 15:10–11). Now, it's just as simple as night follows day. Folks, listen, when you see that you can't and He can, you rely upon His strength. Then when you understand that His light comes through His Word and you receive His Word and then you relinquish to His will.

Conclusion

You see, listen, and think about it. What is the chief duty of a branch? It is not bearing fruit by the way. It is abiding. You see, look, so many of us are going around thinking we're suppose to produce fruit. We don't produce fruit, we only bear it, but even that is not our responsibility. That is the vines responsibility. Ours is one thing to be yielded totally to the vine well you say, “Wait a minute. I'm a doctor. Wait a minute. I'm a lawyer. Wait a minute. I drive a taxi. Wait a minute. I'm a stenographer. Wait a minute. I'm a teacher. Wait a minute. I'm a housewife. I have other things to do.” Well, I feel sorry for you. You say, “Wait a minute. Hold it. You're confusing.” Friend, I don't care what your occupation may be. Your chief duty in life—twenty-four hours a day—is to abide in Jesus Christ. That's it. A branch has no side issues, just one thing. It is available, available to the vine. Have you relinquished your will to Him? Sure, He wants you to be a doctor. Sure, He wants you to be a lawyer. Sure, He wants you to be a housewife. Sure, he wants you to be laborer. That's fine and my dear friend, let me tell you something, when you say, “Lord, I am at your yielding. I am yielded to you. I'm at your command. I have one duty—one function in life—and it is to abide at that moment the life of God begins to manifest itself in you. And, the fruit of God is produced through your life and you have joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Suppose we could hold a conversation with a little branch and I say, “Little branch, you seem so green and luxurious. You seem so fruitful. Look at those grapes. Look at those tendrils. Look at that life in you.” And, he says, “Yes, but you don't look so good.

You look kind of brown and dried and withered.” And, I say, “Well, little branch, what's the secret of your life? You must work very hard.” “Oh,” he says, “I don't really work at it if you want to call it that, no.” “Well, little branch, you must have a lot of enemies.” “Well, I guess I do. I don't think about it that much.” “You see, I have simplified my life very much. I have put all my concerns in one concern. I am concerned only about abiding in the vine and when the summertime comes the sun comes to scorch my leaves and I need a drink of water. I don't worry about where I'm going to get that water. I just abide in the vine and the vine sends his roots down deep in the ground and brings me water to cool my parched tongue. And, when the time of the vintage comes and it's time for grapes, I don't worry about how many grapes. I don't worry about what size or what color. That's none of my business. You see, I don't produce the grapes. I just bear them. My duty is to abide in the vine.”

Jesus said, “these things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). Do you want fullness of joy? Here's the way. Let's bow and pray.

Fullness of Joy: What It Is and How to Have It

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 27, 1993

Main Scripture Text: John 15:11

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

JOHN 15:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Character of This Joy
 - II. The Constancy of This Joy
 - III. The Condition of This Joy
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find John chapter 15. In a moment, we’re going to look at verse 11. John chapter 15, verse 11. Someone has written these words: “A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in. A minute to smile and an hour to weep in. A pint of joy and a peck of trouble. And never a smile but the moan comes double. And this is life.”

Well, friend, that is not life if you know the Lord Jesus Christ. The life that the Lord Jesus gives is a life of joy. I want us to think tonight about joy, what it is and how to have it. And Stan and Laura, as you go to Mongolia, please when you pack, be sure that you take the joy with you. Ah, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ and know Jesus in His fullness, no matter where you are or nor matter what your lot, you will have conscious joy, continual joy, conspicuous joy, and contagious joy. The reason for that is John chapter 15 and verse 11. Jesus says, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy, my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Fullness of joy - what it is and how to have it. Someone has well said that a joyless Christian is truly a contradiction in terms.

I think the joy of the Lord is so necessary in winning the lost. You’ve heard me say many times that most of the people in this generation are not all that interested in eternity, heaven, or hell. They want to know how do you hack it on Monday, how do you live in this day and this frenetic age? Where do you get the joy? And our joy is one of

the greatest tools we have in bringing people to Jesus Christ.

Somewhere years ago, I learned or read of some prospectors for gold in the Yukon. Ha, they were out, and they, they found an incredible load of gold. And they came back into town to get supplies and to get the materials that they would need to go out and claim the gold, to stake a claim, and to claim the gold. And they covenanted it among themselves, "We will not tell anybody what we have found, because if we do, they'll all follow us out there and we'll have to share what we found." And so, they made a solemn pact.

They went into town and bought the supplies. And on their way back a horde of people was following. The reason was this: That what they'd seen showed all over their faces! They could not hide the excitement that was there, even though they had determined not to tell it. It had to show! And, you know, I believe that those of us who are Christians have found something far better, ha, ha, than gold. And the, and the joy of the Lord ought to be so real in our hearts that there ought to be those who will want what we have because it has shown on our face and we cannot hide it. Not only is, is the joy of the Lord so necessary in sharing our faith. And, by the way, you're not going to be much of a soul winner if you look like an advanced agent for the undertaker. You know, I've seen these guys with a scowl on their face and a big, black Bible under their arm. "Don't you want to be saved so you can be as miserable as I am?" "No, thank you. Got enough trouble of my own already. Thank you, sir."

But not only is it necessary to bringing the lost to Christ, but the joy of the Lord is necessary in serving the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says we're to serve the Lord with gladness to live the Christian life. When you live the Christian life, how are you going to do it? Friend, there are obstacles and difficulties and trials every day, every step, but the joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

And I want us to look at this verse therefore, fullness of joy, what it is, how to have it.

I. The Character of This Joy

First of all, I want you to think of the, the character of this joy that he's talking about. Look at it in verse 11: "These things have I spoken unto you (now watch), that my joy might remain in you...." It is not joy like His. It is His joy. That's not a small point. You're not called upon to imitate His joy or to try to have the same source of joy that He has. You are to have His joy. I want to say here that Je, Jesus was a joyful person. As a matter of fact, the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, "Wherefore, my God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Nobody ever has had the joy that Jesus had when He walked this earth.

Now we think of Jesus as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but Jesus spoke of His joy. Learn this about the Lord Jesus: Jesus was not a pale, sanctimonious,

religious recluse. Jesus had a life of abounding, overflowing joy. And one of the ways I know this more than anything else is this: The little children loved the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus. But they came. They wanted to be near Him. They wanted to sit in His lap. And, and, you see, Jesus is saying, “The joy that I want for you is literally My joy.”

Now you're in 15, chapter 15. Turn to chapter 17 if you will and look in verse 13. Here's the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have (look, look at it), that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Not joy like His. His joy! It is a supernatural gift of God. That is the joy that I'm talking about. That's the character of it.

II. The Constancy of This Joy

I want you to see the constancy of it. Go back to chapter 15, verse 11: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might (what?) remain in you...” Not that it might be here part of the time, but that it might be constant, that is might be stable. That's the reason the apostle Paul could say, “Rejoice in the Lord (what?) always...” Night and day! This joy is to be constant. It is to be something that, that never changes. That's the reason that we told you so many times that joy and happiness are not the same. Happiness changes. Why? Because it depends upon happenstance. That's why we call it happiness. If your happ is good, you're happy. If your happ is bad, you're unhappy. And there's nothing wrong with being happy, but you wouldn't want to be happy all the time. You'd get sick and tired of it. Be like having ice cream for every meal. You're not supposed to be happy all the time. There's something wrong with you if you're happy all the time, ha, ha. You don't know what's happening, ha, ha, (laughter). Friend, you, you don't have to go around with a goony grim on your face to have joy. You don't have to be some sort of a slap-back, back-slapping, wise-crackling moron. These are serious days in which we live. But in the midst of all of that, though you may not be happy, you have joy. This joy does not depend upon what happens.

Now, if you do get joy from what happens, if the source of your joy is external (that is, if you get your joy from amusement, or you get your joy from your business, or you get your joy from your health, or you get your joy from your friends or even your family), that can change. The source of your joy is the thing that dictates whether or not your joy is constant. As a matter of fact, a good test is to find out whether, where you're getting your joy from is to find out what it takes to take your joy away.

How do you know that you're getting your joy in Jesus and not from your health? Take your health and see if you still have your joy. How do you know whether you're getting your joy and your money, your possessions and not in Jesus? Take the

possessions and see if you still have the joy. You see, circumstances can change. And if your joy is in circumstances, when the circumstances change, then the joy changes. You need a joy that is constant. As Jesus said, that, "...it might remain."

Lord Byron was a handsome, witty, charming, gifted poet. He was the life of the party. He lived wild, high, and handsome. But then, he was afflicted with disease because of the way he lived. He wrote these words: "My days are in the yellow leaf. The flowers and the fruits of life are gone. The worm, the grief, the canker are mine alone."

I've been around long enough to know this: That the devil doesn't have any old people full of joy. He doesn't have any old people full of joy. Now there are some youngsters – they have joy. They don't have the joy of the Lord. They don't have Jesus' joy. And, therefore, when the wine of life runs out, they have no more joy. The joy that Jesus gives never runs out. Listen to this: Psalm 16, verse 11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy. At thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." "These things have I written unto you, that my joy might remain in you..." It really doesn't matter what happens.

You have sorrow? Isaiah 61, verse 3: "...the oil of joy for mourning..." John 16, verse 20: "...your sorrow shall be turned into joy." It is steadfast in sorrow. It is triumph in tribulation. Listen to this: Second Corinthians 7, verse 4: "...I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation."

Learn this about joy: Joy is not there to remove the pain. Joy is there to help you to bear the pain. Paul didn't say, "I don't have any tribulation." He said, "I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation."

You say, "Well, they, they took my stuff from me. I lost my job and I lost my joy." Oh? Listen to Hebrews 10, verse 34: "...for ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

You say, "Well, on the job they criticize me for being a Christian." Oh? First Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 6: "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost, having receive the word in, in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost." As a matter of fact, if you get afflicted for being a Christian, that ought to just double your joy because it's a sign that you know the Lord and people can see a difference in you. No, friend. This joy is constant.

Do you know when Jesus spoke these words? You say, "He must have been on His way to a party." No. He was on His way to a crucifixion. Jesus spoke these words facing dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary. It was there that He spoke of this joy.

Now circumstances had dictated whether or not He'd have joy. It's obvious He would have had no joy. But Jesus, facing the cross, spoke of His joy. Why? Because no matter what was happening externally, there was that joy.

I was born and raised in West Palm Beach, Florida, there a hop, skip, and a jump from the ocean, a hop, skip, and a jump I'd like to take a lot of times. I've seen many hurricanes come to the coast of Florida. I've seen many pleasure craft and boats that have been destroyed and washed up on the beach after a storm. But I've never see a submarine washed up on the beach after a storm, because forty feet beneath the surface of that ocean it's as calm as a millpond, no matter what the storm is doing up on the surface. That's where your joy is – not on the winds that blow on the surface of your life, but down in the deep in the reservoir of your soul there is that joy of the Lord.

The character of it. It is His joy. The constancy of it. It remains.

A young lady had a deep sorrow to come into her life. She carried that sorrow to the Lord and then she wrote a poem. I want you to listen to it. *“Joy through my teardrops and gains through my losses. Beauty for ashes and crowns for my crosses. He binds my wounds. He dries all my tears. Calms every storm and He conquers my fears. He gives me hind’s feet to walk on high places. He floods my soul with His heavenly graces. When I’m weak, then His strength makes me strong. I know that I can trust Him, He’s never been wrong. Trials may come and temptations assail me. Though I may falter, He never will fail me. So, Satan, I bind you in His holy name, for at the cross Jesus’ blood overcame. When the doubt comes, when I’m lonely, when my heart is sad, I’ll lift up my eyes to my Savior above and Jesus will make me glad.”* The young who wrote that’s my daughter. Her name is Janice. Going through a time of sorrow. But I watched her in that time of sorrow find the joy that Jesus alone can give, not outside the circumstances, but in the circumstances. Joy through my teardrops and gains through my losses.

Now there’s a third thing I want you to see. I want you to see not only the character of this joy and the constancy of it, but I want you to see the completeness of it, the completeness of it. Look at it. “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your, your joy might be full, might be full.” Not partial joy, but the fullness of joy. Psalm 16, verse 11: “Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy...” First Peter chapter 1 and verse 8: “...joy unspeakable and full of glory.” All other joys are incomplete and, therefore, insufficient.

There is a need that you have that only Jesus can meet, only Jesus! You have a need for joy that is not partial, but full. Jesus and Jesus alone can meet the deepest need of your heart.

III. The Condition of This Joy

Let me mention the last thing tonight, and that is the condition of it. What are the conditions of this joy? You see, it’s not automatic. If it were automatic, Jesus never would have said what He said. He said in John chapter 15 and verse 11, “These things

have I spoken unto you in order that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.” So it wasn’t automatic. There is a condition that you must meet and fulfill in order to have that joy. Not every Christian has joy. If every Christian automatically had joy, Jesus never would have said, “I, I’m telling you something in order that you might have it.” Well, what had Jesus spoken when He said that? This is the conclusion of the story, the parable, the illustration, the simile, the metaphor, whatever you want to call it of the branches, the vine and the branches.

Look, if you will, in verse 5 of this same chapter. Jesus said, “I am the vine (not divine, but THE vine).” He is divine, but that’s not what He’s saying. “I am THE vine; ye are the branches. He that abideth in, in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing.”

And Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is joy....” The fruit of the Spirit is joy. Now Jesus is telling us how to have this fruit, and He’s saying that, “You need to conceive of Myself as a vine. You need to conceive of yourselves and think of yourselves as branches. And as branches abide in the vine and, therefore, bear fruit, you need to abide in Me so that you can bear fruit. I’m the vine. You’re the branches.” Galatians 5:22. A part of this fruit is the joy of the Lord.

Now to be very clear, I hope, joy comes by abiding in Jesus. Joy comes by abiding in Jesus. How is Jesus’ joy going to be in you? For you to be in Christ! And for Christ to be in you means, therefore, that His joy is in you, regardless of what happens.

Conclusion

Now what does it mean to abide in Christ? Well, it means, first of all, absolute dependence in Jesus. One thing you can say about a branch – it is totally, absolutely dependent upon the vine, is that not right? If you cut of a branch from the vine, it withers, it dies. It bears no fruit. It has no life apart from abiding in the vine. It is absolutely, totally dependent. That’s the reason Jesus said, “Without Me you can do (what?) nothing.” Not a little bit, nothing!

Now I’m telling you about joy now. The life of a branch is absolute dependence. But it is also a life of deep restfulness.

Do you know really, when you think about it, a branch only has one concern, and that is to stay abiding in the vine. It really has no other concerns. Once the branch is connected to and continues to abide in the vine, from there on the branch’s problems are really the vine’s problems. When the, when the branch needs sustenance, when it needs water, when it needs minerals and sap to flow through it, it doesn’t have to worry about that. That’s not its concern. It is the branch that abides in the vine, and the vine sends its roots down deep into the earth and brings up that nutriment for the vine. That’s, or, for the branch. That’s the vine’s responsibility. The branch’s responsibility is

only to abide. When it's time for grapes, the branch does not produce the grapes. It bears the grapes. The vine produces the grapes. So, you see how that takes the responsibility away from me and from you.

My responsibility is not to produce fruit. It is to abide in the vine. And the number of the grapes, the size of the grapes, the sweetness of the grapes – that's His business, not mine. My business is to abide in the vine. "If you will abide in Me, and My word will abide in you," Jesus said, "then you're going to bear much fruit."

But here's the point: Now we're talking about having joy. The life of a branch is primarily a life of full surrender. A branch has no side issues – none! It does, it, it's not working for any other outfit. It exists for no other cause. It is totally surrendered to the branch, I mean, to the vine that it abides in. It's not in the business of producing marbles, only grapes. And, really, not even producing grapes – only bearing the grapes that the vine produces.

F. B. Meyer, one of the great devotional writers of another age, tells in his writing how he discovered the fullness of joy, and this is what he said. And I want you to listen to this story. It's a remarkable story, and I'll be finished. This is what F. B. Meyer said, the great British pastor. He said, "Joy began in my life one solemn night when I knelt before Christ and had the holy light of His Spirit turned upon one thing in my heart that was filthy." Now this is a pastor talking.

"One thing in my heart that was filthy. It had accumulated there, and I hardly knew it. I had been living a very unsettled life for some time when a young fellow came and spoke in my church and led me to feel that he possessed the secret which I had not myself."

Here's a pastor. He has a guest speaker. This guest speaker is full of joy. And this pastor recognizes this, this noted pastor in London. "That young man has a quality of life, a character, a contagious, conspicuous joy that I don't have."

The next morning at 7:00, F. B. Meyer went to see that young man, humbled himself, and said, "Please excuse me for coming. The fact is that I don't have any joy. I'm a Christian minister. People expect much of me, but my heart is full of evil and I can't deal with it. Can you help me?"

This young man said to the great F. B. Meyer, "Have you given yourself entirely to Christ?" F. B. Meyer said, "Well, yes, in a general way, I have." Then the young man penetrating said to him, "If you have not done so entirely, go alone and settle it."

F. B. Meyer left. He said, "That night I knelt by my bed, locked the door to my room, and resolved that I would not go to sleep until I got the matter settled." He said, "I began to wrestle with the Lord in prayer, and it seemed as though spiritually I had a big bunch of keys on a key ring, just like I carry with me in my normal course of life." And he said, "It seemed as though God was asking for those keys. And so," he said, "I took one little

key from the bunch that was the key to one little cabinet. And then I handed the bunch over to Jesus, and I said, 'Here, Lord, are the keys of my life.'" And F. B. Meyer said, "The Lord looked at me sadly and said, 'Are they all there?' I said, Yes, Lord, they're all there except for one, small key to a little cupboard that really doesn't make any difference. It can't amount to very much." And F. B. Meyer said it seemed as though the Lord said to me, "Meyer, if you cannot trust Me with everything, you can't trust Me with anything." And Satan whispered to Meyer at that time, "Don't you give Him that last key. Ha, ha. Don't give that one to Him. Because if you give Him that last key, there's no telling what else He may ask of you. Don't give it to Him."

No peace came to his soul. At last, he said to the Lord, "O Lord, I'm not able. I cannot give You the key. But, Lord, I'm willing for You to come and take it." And he said he held out his hand and he said, "Jesus came and opened his hand and took that key and went straight to that cupboard and opened that cupboard."

F. B. Meyer said that when He opened the cupboard, and I looked in there, I saw something that was vile and terrible and hideous. And Jesus said to me, "This must go. And you can never go this way again." And Meyer said, "At that moment, He took the thing from me. And not only did He take it; He took the desire from it, for it. And not only that, I began to hate it when I yielded myself absolutely and totally, 100%, to Jesus Christ. And I said to the Lord Jesus Christ, "From this night, I want You to do what You will with my life." He went to sleep.

He said, "The next morning, I expected to wake with a sort of a hallelujah feeling, but," he said, "I didn't." He said, "I'm as calm, I was as calm and as quiet as I am right now this moment." But he said, "I had a delightful sense that now I belong to Jesus Christ." And he said, "At least a hundred times that day, I said, 'I am His. I am His. I am absolutely His.'" And he said, "That's when I discovered the joy of the Lord.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full..." What did He say? "I am the vine. You're the branches. Abide in Me." And a branch has but one concern, and that is full surrender to the vine.

I would say to you tonight, no matter what else you may achieve, no matter who you may know or what you may call your own, if you don't have joy, your life is basically meaningless if you don't have joy. And I'll say something else. You'll never really have true, constant fullness of joy until you have the joy that Jesus alone can give.

Jesus sent His disciples out. They came back and said, "Lord, why, even the devils were subject to us in Your name." And Jesus said, "Don't rejoice in this, but rejoice in this: that your name is written in heaven." Is yours? Is yours? Is it? Let's bow our heads in prayer.

O Lord, I pray tonight in the name of Jesus for any who may be here tonight who has never truly said an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ, that tonight they might receive Him

as their personal Lord and Savior and trust Him for forgiveness and salvation and be saved tonight. And I pray for many who may tonight want to make that full surrender and give every key to Jesus Christ. In His name I pray, amen.

How to Find Joy

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 31, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 15:11

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

JOHN 15:11

Outline

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Introduction

Would you be finding John chapter 15. Put your finger on verse 11. When you've found it, look up here. John chapter 15 is a chapter that is written about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is facing the cross that we've been talking about today. But here's the interesting thing. The verse that I'm going to read to you and share with you in just a moment deals not with suffering, not with agony, not with pain, not with despair; it deals with joy. Right in the face of the crucifixion, right on the brink of agony Jesus is talking about joy.

Now, I don't know the names of everyone here. I don't know all about the innermost working of your heart. But I believe that I am absolutely correct when I say that you want joy. I think that's true of all humankind. We want joy. The problem is that we're looking for it in the wrong places.

A woman lost her house keys. She looked and looked and looked and looked and looked. You've done something like that, haven't you? Just looked everywhere. And

then she opened her purse, and there they were. Now, you want me to tell you why she found her keys in her purse? Because that's where she left them, right? Number two: Do you know why she didn't find her keys in the other place? They weren't there. Now, do you know why some folks don't find joy? They're looking for it in the wrong place. They're trying to find it, but you'll never find it, until you look in the right place.

Now, I guess the key verse on joy in all of the Bible is John chapter 15 and verse 11. Look at it. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"—"...that my joy might remain in you, that your joy would be full."

The life of a Christian is to be a life of joy. A joyless Christian is a contradiction in terms. It would be like saying a heavenly devil—a joyless Christian. If you don't have joy, there is something wrong. Your life is to be a life of joy—continual joy, conspicuous joy, contagious joy is to be yours, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you can know Jesus and not have this joy. That's the reason Jesus is telling us what He's telling us. Joy is not inevitable. It's optional. But you ought to have joy, if you want joy.

You see, joy is so very important in winning the lost. Many of us go around trying to witness about our faith and we look like an advanced agent for the undertaker, with a Bible under one arm and a tombstone under the other, saying, "Wouldn't you like to be saved?" No, thanks, I have enough problems of my own without getting some more. The joy of the Lord is indispensable in winning the lost.

David, in Psalm 51, had lost his joy. And then, he prayed. He said, "Lord, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and then shall sinners be converted unto thee." Now, I am telling you, folks, that the joy of this congregation means as much when a lost man comes in here as what is preached from the pulpit, because what we believe is caught as well as taught, and you ought to have the joy of the Lord in your heart to win the lost.

The joy of the Lord is indispensable in serving the Lord. You see, the Bible says, "The joy of the Lord is what?" Your strength! What does the Bible say? "Serve the Lord with gladness..." The joy of the Lord will take the weariness and the burden and the labor out of serving the Lord.

These people who are in this Passion Play this week, they have given hour upon hour upon hour upon hour of effort. But, oh, when you look at them, they're so full of joy. Why do they do this? They don't do it for Jim Whitmire. They don't even do it for you. They do it for Jesus. And the joy of the Lord is their strength. You serve the Lord with gladness.

Hey, folks, the joy of the Lord is so necessary when you have problems—and you will have them! If you don't have them now, just hold on. Man that is born of woman is few of days and full of trouble, isn't that true? Well, you see, one person has so wisely said, "Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional." Did you catch that? Now, listen. "Pain is

inevitable; misery is optional.” God never intended for you to be free of pain, but He never intended for you to be filled with misery.

This joy is not a nicety, therefore. It is a necessity. It is the lubricant of life. Having said that, we’re going to look at what the Lord Jesus teaches about joy here—joy unspeakable and full of glory—and how you can have it, and what it is.

I. The Joy of the Lord Is Supernatural in Its Source

The very first thing I want you to see is this: I want you to see that this joy is supernatural in its source. Do you have that? This joy is supernatural in its source. Look at verse 11: “These things have I spoken unto you—now watch this; look at it—that my joy might remain in you...” Whose joy? His joy! Not joy like His. Are you listening? Not joy like His. His joy! You see, the life of Jesus was a life of joy. The psalmist said, “Thou hast anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.” That means that nobody ever had joy like the Lord Jesus. And the word gladness there is a word that has the idea of leaping—leaping! It’s the idea of when the John the Baptist was in the womb of Elizabeth, and Mary came into the presence of Elizabeth, and the baby Jesus was in the womb of Mary, John the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth. The Bible says that the baby in the womb of Elizabeth, the Bible said that baby leaped for joy in the womb of Elizabeth. That’s the same idea that speaks of Jesus. And, the word for joy there has the idea of leaping.

Now, we picture Jesus many ways. I want you to picture in your mind Jesus just leaping for joy—just leaping for joy. “Thou hast anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.” Don’t get the idea that Jesus was some pale, sanctimonious, religious recluse. Friend, Jesus—and I’m not saying this disrespectfully—was the life of the party. I love the scene in the Passion Play at the wedding feast where the Lord Jesus is there rejoicing with the people, because He had joy, real joy. That was the joy of the Lord Jesus. Jesus was the kind of a person, Brother Michael, that little children wanted to be around. Now, you show me a sourpuss and tell me if little children want to be around someone like that. Jesus had joy! His life was a life of joy. And then, Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might be in you...” The joy that I’m talking about, folks, is supernatural joy. He says the same thing in John chapter 17, verse 13: “These things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” And that’s the reason the great apostle Paul said in Philippians chapter 4, verse 4: “Rejoice in the Lord...” Not in circumstances: in the Lord! And that’s the first thing I want you to see, and I hope you to get it.

This joy—now, listen; you’ll miss the whole message if you don’t get this—this joy is supernatural in its source. Have you got it? Nod your head. Okay. It’s supernatural. We’re not just talking about cheering up. It is supernatural in its source.

II. The Joy of the Lord Is Steadfast in Strength

Now, therefore, it is steadfast in its strength. Now, listen. Only when it is supernatural at its source can it be steadfast in its strength. Look at the verse again: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy, have I spoken unto you, that my joy might—what’s that next thing?—remain in you, that my joy remain...” Because it is supernatural, it is steadfast.

Now, many of us think that the shortest verse in the Bible is that one that says, “Jesus wept.” And that is the shortest in the English Bible, but it’s not the shortest in the Greek Bible. I mean, as the Scripture is written in Greek and translated into English. Do you know the shortest verse in the Greek is in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 16? It’s two words in English, but one word in Greek. The two words in English are these: Rejoice evermore. That in the Greek is the shortest verse in the Bible. Rejoice evermore! It’s the shortest verse, but it deals with the longest time—evermore. Rejoice evermore! I’m talking to you about this steadfast joy—joy that Jesus said will remain. It’s not happiness; it’s joy! You’re not supposed to be happy all the time.

I was reading about a little girl. She was 12 years old. She lives in Winnipeg, Canada. She wanted to get in the Guinness World Book of Records. And so, she held a smile on her face for 10 hours and 5 minutes. Little Lisa Lester—for 10 straight hours and 5 minutes. Do you think you’d want to do that for 10 hours? You’d get sick of it. It might be a relief to know that you can have joy and not have to go around with a goony grin on your face all the time. Jesus, who had joy, yet was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The Bible tells us that Jesus wept.

You see, what’s the difference between joy and happiness? Happiness may give smiles, put laughter on our face, but happiness is just what the word describes. Happiness depends on what happens. Therefore you call it happiness. If your hap is good, then you’re happy. If your hap is bad, then you’re unhappy. It all depends upon happenstance and whatever happens. But joy depends upon the Lord. It is supernatural. It is not natural. And, therefore, because that joy is supernatural, that joy is steadfast. It is not happiness. Happiness is like a cosmetic; it’s on the outside. Joy is routed in character. Happiness responds to surface needs; joy deals with our deepest needs. Happiness is like a thermometer. It measures and registers conditions. But joy is like a thermostat. It controls conditions. And happiness evaporates in the time of suffering, but joy is often deepened in the time of suffering because we come to the Lord and we depend upon the Lord.

Now, I tell you it’s wonderful when happiness and joy get together. That’s wonderful. Our happiest moments are made all the more happy and all the more wonderful when they are mingled with the joy of the Lord. But if you take away the happiness, you’ll find that sometimes the joy may even intensify. As Jesus was facing the cross, He was not

happy. He said, “There’s no sorrow like my sorrow.” And yet, facing that cross, He says, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” I believe it’s cruel to say to people, “Just smile and be happy,” when they’re hurting. Don’t ever go to a funeral and say that to a person. Don’t ever say that to a mama who’s just lost a little baby. Don’t ever say that to a wife whose husband has been diagnosed with a malignancy—“Oh, just smile and be happy.” That’s cruel. Sit down and weep with them. It’s mockery to sing sometimes, “I’m in-right, out-right, down-right happy all the time.” Not only is it mockery; it’s a downright lie. Nobody’s happy all the time. You’re not expected to be. But you’re to have joy all the time. The Bible says, “Rejoice in the Lord...” What’s that next word? “Always—always—and again I say, Rejoice.”

A. It Is Steadfast in Sorrow

The joy of the Lord, folks, is steadfast in sorrow.

Now, you’re in John 15. Look in verse John 16 and verse 20—Jesus said, “...and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy.” Jesus, facing dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary, found out that His joy and your joy is to be steadfast in sorrow. He knew that.

B. It Is Triumphant in Tribulation

Not only steadfast in sorrow, but triumphant in tribulation. Now, our Lord says, “In this world you’ll have tribulation; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” And that’s the reason the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 4—put this in your margin; listen to it: “...I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” Now, He didn’t say, “I’m joyful because I don’t have any tribulation.” “I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” Christianity is not the subtraction of problems from life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems. And the man who said, “I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation,” was the one who sang songs at midnight. He’s the one—Paul and Silas in the prison, when they’ve been beaten, lacerated in a filthy dungeon, they sang praises to God. Why? I am joyful—we are joyful in all our tribulation.

C. It Is Lasting in Losses

Not only is it steadfast in sorrow, not only is it triumphant in tribulation, but it is lasting in losses—lasting in losses. Here’s a verse I was looking at yesterday—Hebrews 10, verse 34. The writer of Hebrews is talking to the Christian community, and he says, “...you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods...”

Now, suppose you came home today and everything in your house had been carried out by the thieves. I hope that doesn’t happen to do, but suppose it did; I mean, everything—your heirlooms, your treasurers, your photograph albums—all gone. I want to ask you a question. Would that take away your joy? Now, if it did, those things are the

source of your joy. Those things are the source of your joy, and your joy is no better than its source. Now, you've got to have something that is better than that in order for you to have this joy that is steadfast. That's the reason Jesus didn't say, "These things have I spoken unto you—have a lot of nice possessions, that you might have joy." He said, "...that my joy might remain in you." Listen to that verse again. It says there in Hebrews 10, verse 34: "...you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods..."

Let me read with you a letter that I received in the mail. "Dear Pastor Rogers, I'm writing to tell you of something that happened to me today, because I would like you to know of this one instance where a particular sermon or message hit the spot in a very meaningful way." And then, she says, "There must be many others who could give accounts of similar occurrences. As I was getting ready to go to work this morning, I was listening to my Steve Green tape." By the way, we're having Steve Green next Sunday. He is incredible. "I was listening to my Steve Green tape, as I frequently do, and, in particular, to the song—here's the song—That's Where the Joy Comes From. Here is the excerpt that proved to be particularly meaningful." And then, she quotes from this song. "Thieves may try to rob my treasures, but they don't hold the key that leads into the sanctuary where God's Spirit lives in me. Thieves may try to rob my treasures, but they don't hold the key that goes to the sanctuary where God lives in me." She says, "Now, I was up. I was listening to this tape. I was listening to Steve Green sing that tape." And then, she says, "And I found myself thinking about a certain one of your sermons, a message referring to the sources of your joy. I remembered you saying, "If a tragedy or a traumatic things happens—a child dies, your car is stolen, your home is burglarized and valuable possessions lost—and you lose your joy, then you might well consider where your joy comes from. If your joy is in things or even a person, a child, and you lost that, you can lose your joy. But if your joy is in the Lord, comes from the Lord, and He is enthroned in your heart, that joy can never be taken away." Hey, you know, every now and then it's good to learn that somebody listens. I say, "Whoa, she was listening!" And then, she said this: "Soon after I arrived at work, one of my sons called to tell me that when he drove up to our house about 10:00, he found all the doors open, the house terribly ransacked, and quite a lot of our belongings stolen. Right then, I realized that the Lord had been preparing for this that very morning. I thought about the words of that song and what you said in your message that came so clearly to my mind. If I ever wondered what it is like when God speaks to a person, I know now. When I got home and saw the awful sight, I never even felt like shedding a tear. It took us all afternoon to straighten up the mess the burglars left, and yet this feeling of joy kept popping out. I want you to know that day is a day I will never forget, not because of the burglary, but because of the way God spoke to me and prepared me through your message, and the fact that I really saw today that, "thieves may try to rob

my treasures, but they don't hold the key that leads into the sanctuary where God's Spirit lives in me." And then she writes, "Glory!" with an exclamation point. "Even if the thieves come back, how great to know that my joy is protected." Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful? That's the same thing Jesus is talking about—facing the cross. And then, she says, "Thank you for your ministry. This is surely just a tiny glimmer of the ways that must radiate out and touch many, many lives every day." I'm so grateful for that.

D. It Is Abundant in Affliction

You see, this joy—this joy—is steadfast in sorrow. It's triumphant in tribulation. It's lasting in losses. It is abundant in affliction. Notice 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 6: "...having received the word in much affliction, with joy..."—I like that—"...much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost."

Leonard Ravenhill, a dear preacher of the Word of God, recently has gone to heaven. Here's what dear Len said: "This joy is as real at the graveside as at the fireside. It does not evaporate in the heat of adversities. It does not wither at the onslaught of calamities. It does not sour under the test of poverty. It does not die at the cruel hand of tragedy. It does not falter in the presence of misery."

My youngest daughter is a precious Christian. She went through deep sorrow. And she wrote a song. The tune is set to "Some of My Favorite Things" from The Sound of Music. If you know the tune, then I want you to think of it in your mind as you listen to these words:

*Joy through my teardrops and gains through my losses;
Beauty for ashes and crowns for my crosses.
He binds my wounds, He dried all my tears;
Calms every storm and He conquers my fears.
He gives me hinds' feet to walk on high places,
He floods my soul with His heavenly graces.
When I am weak, then His strength makes me strong.
I know I can trust Him, He's never been wrong.
Trials may come and temptations assail me,
Though I may falter, He never will fail me.
So, Satan, I bind you in His holy name,
for at the cross Jesus' blood overcame.
When the doubt comes, when I'm lonely,
when my heart is sad, I will lift my eyes to my
Savior above and Jesus will make me glad."*

—JANICE ROGERS EDMISTON

III. The Joy of the Lord Is Sublime in Its Secret

That's so true. That is so true. This joy—it's supernatural in its source. It is steadfast in its strength. "That my joy might remain in you..."

Here's the third and final thing. It's sublime in its secret. It's not automatic. You see, what does He say in verse 11? Listen to it. "These things have I spoken unto you, that—in order that—my joy might be in you..." So, it's not just automatic. It's not even just believing in Jesus. It's not being saved and on your way to heaven. You can go to heaven second-class and be miserable all the way. Jesus is speaking to those who are already saved, but He says, "Now these things have I spoken unto you..." Well then, I think it's worthwhile to find out what He's spoken, don't you? I mean, if we want that joy, then what was He talking about when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you..."? Well, just go back to verse 5, and look at it in verse 5, what had He been speaking about. He said, "I am the vine and ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Now, He's been speaking about abiding in Him. Listen. Look up here. Hear your pastor. Do I have your attention? The secret of joy is so simple, so wonderful. It is gloriously simple; it's simply glorious. It's so clear, it is so plain, that you may miss it. Are you ready for it? The sublime secret of this joy is abiding in Jesus. You say, "Oh, tell me something more." I can't! I can't! Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." What had He spoken? "I am the vine, you are the branches— abide in me." Well, what does that mean, Pastor—to abide in Jesus? Well, let me tell you what it means.

E. Abiding in Jesus: A Life of Reliance

First of all, to abide in Jesus means that is a life of reliance on the Lord Jesus. Now, remember that He's using the figure of a grapevine and the branches. Look, if you will, in verse 4. He says this: "Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." And then He goes on to say in verse 5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit..."—and, oh, if you don't mind marking in your Bible, just underscore this next thing—"...for without me you can do nothing." You say, "I think I can do a little bit, Pastor." Well, that's your opinion. Jesus said, "You must rely on me."

Have you ever thought about how absolutely dependent a branch is on the vine? If you took a branch and severed it from the vine, what good is it, especially a grape branch? You can't make furniture out of it. You can't make a peg out of it. You can't carve it. It doesn't make a good fire. The only thing it's for is just to abide in the vine and bear fruit. You're absolutely, totally dependent upon Jesus. Now, most of us don't

realize that. Most of us think we can do a little bit. But Jesus said, “Abide in me. Rely on me. Without me you can do nothing.” You say, “I don’t want to be nothing.” I feel sorry for you because, you know, God specializes in making something out of nothing. If you think you’re something, then Jesus is not everything. Not until you’re willing to become nothing and He becomes everything can He make something out of you. I can’t say that again, but it’s true. Now, you listen to me. You listen to me. The life of a branch is a life of reliance.

F. Abiding in Jesus: A Life of Restfulness

Secondly, it’s a life of restfulness. Look in verse 9 of this same chapter—John 15 and verse 9: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.” Oh, let His love come into you. Just realize that His love, His power is there. Not only rely upon Him, but, oh, precious friend, rest in Him.

Do you know why many of us are upset? We don’t know what we’re going to do. We’re afraid our resources are going to run out. Now, suppose you and I were to have a conversation with a little vine. Let’s suppose that we could talk to a branch abiding in the vine, and we say, “Little branch, you’re so calm.” He says, “Yes, and, Mr. Human, you’re so worried.” “Well, branch, what’s the secret of your restfulness?” He says, “Well, I notice that you human beings are running around all the time trying to produce a lot, but you don’t produce a lot, except worry.” “Well, little branch, what are you doing?” “I’m just resting in the love this vine has for me. I’m just letting his life flow into me.” “Well, you don’t worry?” “No.” “Well, what about when you need nourishment, when the sun comes up and you need moisture?” He says, “That’s none of my business. I just abide in the vine. The vine goes down into the ground and brings up moisture to cool me.” “Well, little branch, what about when it’s springtime and you need leaves and buds?” “I don’t worry about that. That’s none of my business. You see, the vine sends its sap, its life, into me and produces those leaves and those buds.” “But, little branch, what about in the time of harvest when you need grapes?” “Oh, you don’t understand. I don’t produce the grapes; I just bear the grapes. The vine produces the grapes. I don’t worry about what size, how many, how sweet. That’s none of my business. I have but one thing to do, and that is to abide in the vine.” Boy, wouldn’t we be better if we could learn that lesson?

G. Abiding in Jesus: A Life of Relinquishment

It’s a life of reliance, a life of rest, but a life of relinquishment.

Do you know what? A little branch has no side issues. It exists for one purpose. “Adrian, you don’t know me. I’ve got a family to raise. I’ve got sports. I’ve got ambition. I’ve got a vacation. I’ve got a job. I can’t narrow all of my interests in one interest.” Goodbye, joy! So long. Forget it! You say, “Well, I want that joy, but I want all these

other things.” As the kids would say, “Tough stuff!” He knows you have a job. He knows you have a family. But, folks, you need to say, “This one thing I do; I abide in Jesus Christ.” That’s where joy comes from.

Now, Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Now, if you want some other way, if you want it apart from Jesus, forget it!

H. Abiding in Jesus: A Life of Rejoicing

It is a life of relinquishment and, therefore, it is a life of rejoicing.

When you come to that reliance and that rest and that relinquishment, you’ll know that rejoicing. Jesus said it. He starts there in the first part of this chapter about abiding in Him, and then He comes to verse 11, and He says, “And these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

Now, you can have joy in a lot of things, and God wants you to have joy in your grandchildren—nothing wrong with that. Boy, I rejoice in mine. God wants you to enjoy your home. God wants you to have joy in your friends, and in your health, when you have it. That’s wonderful. God doesn’t say, “Don’t rejoice in those things.” But He’s just saying, “Beyond those things, you need a source of joy that is constant, that is real, that cannot fade away.” And the way that you have that is to abide in Jesus, rely upon Him, rest in Him, relinquish to Him, and rejoice in the Lord Jesus. Why? Because Jesus said, when you do this, what will happen? You’ll bear fruit. Galatians 5:22: “The fruit of the Spirit is—what?—joy...” Joy. Joy. That’s where the fruit comes from. You don’t produce this joy. It is supernatural. It is His joy. You bear this fruit as you abide in the Lord Jesus.

Conclusion

Jesus sent His disciples out to witness. They came back. They were so thrilled. They said, “Jesus, even the demons were subject to us in Your name.” And Jesus said, “Don’t rejoice in this. Rejoice that your name is written in heaven.” Is yours written in heaven?

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Don’t gather your books. Don’t look around. If you already know the Lord Jesus, begin to pray for those in this service who may not know Him. No one leave, unless it is an emergency. Begin now to pray. Pray: O my God, in the name of Jesus, if the person sitting next to me does not have his name, her name, written in heaven so they can have real joy, Lord, help them today right now to receive Christ. Get very still, very quiet. Now, if you need Jesus, and you want to be saved, and you don’t have that absolute assurance that you’re a child of God right now, would you pray like this: Lord Jesus, I need You so very much. I want to come to You. I want to trust You. I want my life connected to Your life. I want You to be to me like a vine is to a branch. And I want to be to You, Lord Jesus, like

a branch is to a vine. I want Your life to flow into me, and I want my life to be lived for You. Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You that You suffered, bled, and died on that cross for me. Thank You that You paid for my sins. Now, Lord Jesus, You told me if I would trust You, You would save me, and so I do trust You. Would you tell Him that? Lord Jesus, I trust You. Right now this moment, like a little child, I trust You. Tell Him that. I trust You, Jesus. I believe on You. I receive You as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Just ask Him that. Just quietly, but sincerely, save me, Lord Jesus. Just ask Him. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Now by an act of faith, thank Him. Pray this way: Thank You for saving me. Just thank You; thank You, Lord. I receive it by faith. It's Your gift You purchased with Your blood. I receive it. I am forgiven. I am saved. I am Your child. Begin now, Lord, to pour Your life into me and to make me what You want me to be. Thank You, Lord Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. In the top balcony, just look right here at me. Don't gather your books. This is very important. I want for the next two minutes your full attention. Look right here at me. If you prayed that prayer and you're not ashamed of Jesus, you're not ashamed of Him, I'm going to ask you to do something to help settle it and seal it. I'm going to ask you when we stand and sing the song, "Lord, I Believe; Lord, I Receive; Lord, I Confess You Now." The song is in the bulletin. As we begin to sing that song, I want those of you who prayed that prayer, I want you to make your way down one of these aisles. Just come right down one of these aisles. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister to welcome you. Up there in the balcony, there'll be a minister along to welcome you if you're in the balcony. You needn't come all the way down here. Now, you prayed, and you said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me." The next step is for you to make it public. Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father." Jesus said, "If you deny me before men, I'll deny you before the Father." Walking this aisle doesn't save you, but what it indicates is what saves you, is that you're not ashamed of Jesus. So when you come forward, there'll be a minister standing there. What would you say to him? Just tell him, just say this: "I'm trusting Jesus. I'm trusting Jesus." We want to rejoice with you, answer any questions, give you some Scripture to stand on, and seal this decision in prayer. Okay? Now, don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. If God has spoken to your heart, you want Jesus Christ, you prayed that prayer and asked Him into your heart, as soon as we begin to sing, don't let Satan intimidate you. You step out and come.

Now, others of you who are saved and need a church home, I want you to come at the same time. And I want you to tell the minister that you want to place your

membership here, and he'll tell you how you may become a member of this church.

I'm going to ask that we all sing together. If you're with a friend that needs to come forward, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. And I'm going to ask that no one leave unless it is an emergency. Lord, I Believe; Lord, I Receive; Lord, I Confess You Now.

Let's stand together. You step and come.

How to Have Fullness of Joy

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 21, 2004

Main Scripture Text: John 15:11

Outline

Introduction

I. Why Is Joy So Important?

II. The Joy that Jesus Gives

III. The Recipe for Joy

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen. Thank you for that. What a blessing.

Take your Bibles and find John chapter 15. And while you're finding it, let me say something to you. I don't know a lot about you, and I certainly don't know everything about you, but I know one thing about every mother's child in this building today. May I tell you what it is? You want joy in your life. Now, don't deny it. You do! You want joy in your life. And I want to talk to you today about how to have fullness of joy.

A woman lost her car keys. Have you ever done that? She lost her car keys. She went through the house; she went here, there, opened every drawer. Finally, she looked in her purse and there were her keys. Do you know why she didn't find them at first? She was looking in the wrong place.

Now, the reason people don't have joy, many of them, is they are looking for joy in the wrong place. Friend, joy is not a nicety in the Christian life; it is an absolute necessity. You ought to have in your life, if you're right with God, continual joy, conspicuous joy, contagious joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. And a Christian without joy is a contradiction in terms. It would be like speaking about heavenly devil—as a Christian without joy. But I can tell you, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, there are many, and some in this room, that have lost your joy.

I. Why Is Joy So Important?

Let me tell you why joy is so important.

Number one: It is important in winning the lost to Jesus Christ. Now, you know, that's our best advertisement, is the joy of the Lord. King David loved God with all of his heart, but he lost his joy, and he prayed this in Psalm 51:12: "Restore unto me the joy of thy

salvation.” He hadn’t lost his salvation, but he lost his joy. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. And then—listen to it—and then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

Now, if you’re not a joyful Christian, you’re not an effective soul winner. You’re going around with a Bible under one arm and a tombstone under the other, and saying, “Don’t you want to be like I am?” He said, “No, thank you. I’ve got enough troubles already.” No! Listen. It is so essential in winning the lost.

I’ll tell you something else that the joy of the Lord is essential in, and that is bearing life’s burdens and the strength of the Lord in living the Christian life. How are you going to live the Christian life? Well, you need strength. Where you going to get that strength? The joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord Jesus will energize you and give you strength.

Another reason you need joy is because of the heartaches and trials of life. You have heartaches; I have heartaches. We have difficulties. We have obstacles. How are we going to overcome them? The joy of the Lord is the way that we can overcome them. Joy is the lubricant of life. And the joy of the Lord will take the weariness out of work, and the joy of the Lord will remove the burdens from the heart.

II. The Joy that Jesus Gives

So let’s think a little bit about how to have fullness of joy. Now, look, if you will, in John 15 and verse 11. Jesus Christ is speaking, and the setting is this; He’s just facing dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary, and here’s what He says: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Now, Jesus said, “I’m telling you how to have fullness of joy.”

There are three things I want you to think about, when we think about the joy of the Lord—“my joy.” First of all, we’re to have joy like His. It is His joy—“that my joy might be in you.” What is the joy of Jesus? Number one: It is abounding joy. Write it down. The joy of Jesus is abounding joy. He says, “that my joy might be in you, that your joy might be full.”

Do you know, over in the Book of Hebrews, the Bible says of the Lord Jesus that God the Father has anointed Him with joy, with the oil of gladness above His fellows? The word gladness there is another word for joy. It is translated there in the, in the Book of Jude, as exceeding joy. What it literally means is joy that leaps and dances. Can you imagine Jesus leaping and dancing? That’s the kind of joy He has. It is abounding joy. Not half-hearted joy, not maybe-so joy, but joy that is abounding and supernatural.

I don’t know what your concept of Jesus Christ is, but if you don’t see Jesus as the joyful Jesus, you’ve not seen Jesus. Don’t think of Jesus as some pale, sanctimonious,

religious recluse with ice water for blood. Jesus had a life of abounding joy. Do you know one of the ways I know that? Little children loved Him. Now, listen. If you're a sourpuss and little children don't like you, you've got problems. Little children loved Jesus. They wanted to come and crowd around Him and sit in His lap. And these old disciples said, "Get the kids away," but Jesus said, "No, let them come to me." Jesus had a life of abounding joy.

Now, I want to give you a couple more verses that teach what I'm talking about, that the joy that we're talking about is not a cheap, tin imitation of Jesus' joy; it is His joy.

Jot down John 17, verse 13. There He speaks, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in them."

Jot down Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." Now, the only way that you can rejoice always is to rejoice in the Lord.

You know, some of us, when we were young, were asked to give a memory verse. We love that verse over there in John 11: "Jesus wept." You remember that one? Tried to pull that? "Jesus wept." Now, some people say that's the shortest verse in the Bible. It's really not the shortest verse. Now, it is in the English Bible, but not in the Greek language. In the Greek language, this verse, "Rejoice in the Lord evermore" is really the shortest verse. Now, it speaks of the longest time, "Rejoice in the Lord always." It is the shortest verse with the longest time. "Rejoice in the Lord evermore."

Now, when I'm talking about joy, you need to learn the difference between joy and happiness; the difference between joy that gives meaning to life and happiness that may only put a smile on your face. Now, you look better with a smile, but you don't always have to have a smile on your face. It would be a relief to know that we don't have to go around with a goony grin all the time to have the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is this joy? What is the difference between this joy, this abounding joy, and happiness? Now, if you're happy, I'm glad. If you remember Thumper in the film "Bambi," he said, "If it makes you happy to be happy, go ahead and be happy." And if you have happiness, that's good. But as I've told you, happiness depends upon what happens, and that's why we call it happiness. And, if that's what you're waiting for, and that's what you depend on, then I can tell you clearly and plainly you're going to be a prisoner of circumstances, because there are going to come some times when your hap is bad—B-A-D—bad. That's the time you're going to need joy. Happiness depends on what happens; joy depends upon what? The Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord always." And the only way that you can rejoice always is to rejoice in the Lord, because He never changes.

Now, again, happiness is a cosmetic. And a lot of people look good with cosmetics. And I'm not saying, don't be happy, but joy goes beyond the outward person to the

inward character. Happiness can tell you to meet surface needs, and we all have those, and God knows that we have them, but joy will help you to meet your deepest need. That's why I'm saying that you need joy.

You see, happiness is like a thermometer. It registers conditions. Joy is like a thermostat that controls conditions. Joy is inward; happiness is outward. Happiness—listen—evaporates in the time of trouble. When trouble comes, happiness goes, but joy will be intensified. Now, when joy and happiness work together, that is wonderful. And we all have those times when the happy times are here and the joy of the Lord is in our heart. What a wonderful combination that is. But, friend, when happiness goes, you need the joy all the more, and joy can be intensified. Joy is not there to remove the pain, but to help you to bear the pain. And if you're going through pain, that's all the more reason that you need the joy of the Lord. And let me tell you what joy is? Joy is not the subtraction of problems from life; joy is the addition of power to meet those problems. You're going to have problems, beyond the shadow of any doubt, but I want to tell you that the joy that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ is abundant joy. It is abounding joy—abounding joy. I chose that word carefully because abounding means fullness.

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see about this joy from John chapter 15, verse 11: not only is it abounding joy, but it is abiding joy. Now, look at that verse again. He says, "that my joy might remain in you." It's not joy that comes and goes. It is joy in the good times, the bad times, the nighttime, the daytime, the rainy day, the sunny day; joy in a time of tragedy. It is still there. We're to rejoice in the Lord always—always.

Now, listen to me, precious friend. You may be saying, "Adrian, the reason you're saying that is you're not going through the problems that I'm going through right now. You don't know the heartaches. You don't know the tears. You don't know the fears. You don't know the sickness. You don't know the pain. You don't know how I've been treated. You don't know the finances that I'm facing. And if you did, you wouldn't say that." No, friend, I'm only quoting the words of Jesus. And what was Jesus' situation at this time? Jesus was facing dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary—okay?—dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary. Now, He was not a morose person, even facing the cross. Yes, He had tears. Yes, He had pain. Yes, He had agony. But still He had that joy in His heart.

Now, let me tell you about this abiding joy. Number one, and I want to give you some verses, number one: It is steadfast in sorrow. John chapter 16, verse 20: "your sorrow shall be turned into joy." You have sorrow? God will turn your sorrow to joy.

Number two: It is triumphant in tribulation. Do you have tribulation? Jesus said, "In this world you shall have tribulation." You're not going to escape without tribulation. But listen to this verse. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 4, "I am exceedingly joyful in all

our tribulation”—joyful in tribulation. Paul and Silas in that prison at midnight were singing praises to the Lord. And you cannot sing praises to the Lord triumphantly unless you have joy in your heart.

I'll tell you something else. This joy is lasting in losses. Have you lost something? Have things gone upside down on you? Things that you need, things that you want, they're taken from you? That happened to the Hebrews. I believe it was Paul who wrote the Book of Hebrews. Scholars still debate it, but I think Paul wrote Hebrews. But that's beside the point right now. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 34: “and you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.”

Now, what if you came home from church today and everything's gone? Your house is burned, or else thieves came in, took everything from you, or you read and find out that some conniving shyster has cheated you out of everything, and now you don't have anything. Your goods have been spoiled. Should you lose your joy? Absolutely not! You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. If your goods go and you lose your joy, you were getting your joy in the wrong place. You were getting your joy in the wrong place. Your joy was in your circumstances and what you have rather than who He is. The joy of the Lord is lasting in losses.

And the joy of the Lord is abundant in affliction. Put this down—1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 6: “you have received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.” Affliction, yes; sickness, yes; pain, yes; trouble, yes; joy, yes. Affliction, he says, but he links affliction with joy.

Now, the joy of Jesus is abounding joy—abounding joy. The joy of Jesus is abiding joy: “that my joy might remain in you....”

And, finally, the joy of Jesus is abundant joy. There is a lot of it: “that your joy might be full—might be full.” Now, you say, “Pastor, that's fine. You haven't told me how to have it. How can I have joy?” Well, I'm glad you asked. I want you to look again at verse 11: “These things have I spoken unto you...” Well, it only makes sense to see what He has just spoken. You go back and see what He spoke, and there you will a recipe for joy.

III. The Recipe for Joy

Now, I don't want you to miss the rest of the message. If your mind's been wandering a little bit, tighten the focus now, because I'm talking to you now about how to have fullness, abundant joy.

Now, Jesus said in verse 11, “These things—look—have I spoken unto you, that you might have joy, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” But just back up and see what Jesus has spoken to them.

In John chapter 15, Jesus speaks of Himself as a vine and He speaks of us as branches. And then He tells us that the branch is to abide in the vine. And what Jesus is saying is that when the branch abides in the vine, ipso facto, there is joy. “Well,” you say, “Pastor, that sounds good, but abide is a word I don’t use a whole lot, and it’s kind of a religious word. Could you tell me in plain English what it means to abide in Jesus and, therefore, have abounding joy, therefore, having lasting, abiding joy, and, therefore, having abundant joy?”

What does it mean to abide? All right, I want you to write down these words, and, first of all, it means surrender—surrender. Did you write it down? Look, if you will, in John 15, verse 4: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” Verse 5: “I am the vine, and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.”

Now, now think about this. Just imagine a vine. That’s the Lord Jesus Christ. And imagine a branch. That’s you. Now, don’t miss this point. A branch exists for one reason: the vine. Not two reasons, not one-and-a-half reasons. One reason: the vine. It makes a full surrender to the vine. You say, “But, Pastor, I’ve got a family. I’ve got a job. I’ve got this; I’ve got that. How can I just have one issue?” Well, you must totally, completely abide in the vine. Now, if you don’t do that, you’re not going to have joy. And how do you abide? By a full surrender. Have you ever made a full surrender?

A great English preacher of yesterday was Dr. F. B. Meyer. We still read his devotional books. In one of his books, Dr. Meyer told how he got joy that I’m speaking about. He said he’d been burdened for a long time in living the Christian life, that he did not have the joy that he ought to have. And he said, one time in a meeting there was a young man who seemed to have learned the secret of abundant joy. And he said, “I went to him after the service. I’d heard him speak. And I said, ‘Sir, can you tell me how to have the joy that you have? It seems that you have something that I do not have. Can you tell me how?’”

And F. B. Meyer, this famous preacher, said, “That young man looked at me and said, ‘Have you surrendered everything to Jesus Christ?’” I said, “Well, in a general way, I have.” The young man said, “That’s not good enough. Go alone tonight and get it settled.” Meyer decided he would do that. He went to his bedroom, and locked the door, and got on his knees and said, “Lord, I am going to get this settled tonight.” And he said, “Lord, I’m going to surrender everything to You.” He said, “It seemed like that I had a big bunch of keys and I held them up to the Lord. And I said, ‘Lord, here are the keys to my life. I take them.’” The Lord said to him, “Are they all there?” He said, “Well, they’re all there, except one little key. I’ve kept that back.” The Lord said, “You must give Me that

key.” And Satan said, “Don’t do it. Don’t do it. If you give Him everything, no telling what He will ask of you.” And Meyer was going through a struggle, and he said to the Lord, “Lord, I don’t have the strength to give You this last key, but, Lord, would You take it.”

He said, “The Lord opened his fingers and got that little key and went to a cupboard and opened it, and inside was vileness and wickedness and sin.” He’d never seen the import of what he was holding back from the Lord. And he repudiated that sin and turned from it. And he said, “That night, the desire for that died in my heart.” He said, “I went to sleep expecting to wake up in the morning with hallelujahs and praises,” but he said, “No, instead, I just had a quiet confidence, and I found myself all day long saying, I am His, I am His, I am His, I am completely His!”

Now, a vine and a branch are connected together. But now, listen. It must be a life of surrender. Did you write down the word surrender?

All right now, here’s the second word I want you to write down. Not only surrender, but dependence—dependence. The joy of Jesus is given when you depend upon the Lord. Now, look at the Scripture here when He says in John 15, verse 5, the last part of that, “without me you can do nothing.” You say, “Now, wait a minute, Pastor. I might do a little bit.” Well, may I say, that’s your opinion. I’d rather take the word of Jesus. “Without me you can do nothing.”

Well, use common sense. What can a branch do without a vine? Nothing! That’s a zero with the edges trimmed off. Nothing! You say, “I think it’s something.” Well, in eternity, it will be nothing. The branch makes a full surrender, and that full surrender turns to an absolute dependence upon the Lord.

Now, when you think you’re something, then God is not everything. And God cannot be everything until you become nothing. But don’t worry about it. God specializes in making something out of nothing when you abide in the Lord.

Now, here’s the third word I want you to write down—surrender, dependence—the third one is rest—rest. Now, look in verse 9, if you will. He says, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love.” Rest in His love. He loves you. That’s not rhetoric. That is rock-ribbed truth. He loves you. He loves you. But you must abide in His love. Let Him love you, and that’ll give you rest. I mean, when you see yourself as the object of His love, you’ll say, “He loves me.”

Just imagine that a human being could have a conversation with a branch. And the branch would say to the human being, “Now, you human beings think you’re so intelligent, but you always seem frustrated to me, rushing around, knocking things over—no rest, no peace.”

And the man says to the branch, “Well, you seem to have peace. How do you do it?” He says, “I’ve reduced all my concerns to one, and that is to abide in the vine. And

once I do that, worry has to go. When it's summertime and I need a drink of water, I don't worry about where it comes from. That's the vine's business. I abide in the vine, and the vine puts its roots down into the ground and brings up that moisture for my wilted leaves. And then, when it's springtime and I need buds, I don't worry about where those buds are going to come from. I abide in the vine. And when the time of vintage and harvest comes, I don't worry about the grapes—how big, how few, how sweet. It's none of my business. I don't produce the fruit.”

You see, the Bible tells us in the Book of Galatians chapter 5, verse 22: “The fruit of the Spirit is joy—the fruit of the Spirit is joy.” You're not going to create that joy. You're not going to clench your fist today and grit your teeth and say, “I'm going to have joy if it kills me.” You can't do that. You abide.

And the branch says, “Sir, I just abide in the vine; and the grapes are His, not mine. I don't produce them. I simply bear them.”

Now, let me give you another word I want you to write down, and it's the fourth word. You won't like this one, but it's obedience.

Now, what we're doing is talking about how to abide. Jesus is saying, “Look, I want you to have joy. These things have I spoken unto you that you might have joy.” Now, what did He speak? He spoke of obedience. Look in verse 10: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” And Jesus spoke of His joy because He kept the commandments of the Father. Now, there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

If I were to ask you, “How many of you today love Jesus?” I suppose we'd all lift our hands—some just because we didn't want to be seen with our hands down. We'd all lift our hands. But Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my word. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loves me. And he that loves me shall be loved of my Father—now, watch this—and I will manifest myself to him.”

How's God going to manifest Himself to you? The manifestation of His presence in your heart is joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory, as you, friend, obey the Lord.

Now, last of all—last of all—write down the word rejoicing, and we've come full circle. Now, we come back to verse 11 where we started. What He says here, “These things have I spoken unto you,” and He spoke about the vine and the branches. “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

I know you've got problems, I know you have heartaches, and that's why you need joy. Our Lord said this: “Don't rejoice because the demons are subject to you.” If they are, I'm glad. But Jesus said—listen—“Rejoice—rejoice that your name is written in

heaven.” Is your name written in heaven? All of this that I’ve said will do you absolutely no good unless your name is written in heaven. Now, you can have your name written in heaven and go to heaven second-class without joy, but if your name is written in heaven, you know, come what may, weal or woe, heartache, tears, I am heaven-born, I’m heaven-bound, I’m going to heaven, and I rejoice that my name is written in heaven.

Conclusion

Friend, without genuine joy your life is meaningless. Is that too big a statement? Absolutely not! Without genuine joy your life is meaningless. And joy is only found in Jesus. “That my joy might remain in you.” Not joy like His, but the supernatural joy of Jesus Christ.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes closed. Those of you who are saved, have you let the devil take the joy out of your life? Repent of it. Come and surrender to Jesus. Depend upon the Lord Jesus. Rest in the Lord Jesus. Do it! Do it! Obey the Lord Jesus, and let that joy be renewed in your heart and in your life. It’s called abiding in Jesus. And those of you who’ve never, ever received Jesus, all of the rest of this is impossible until you take the first step and rejoice that your name is written in heaven. When you give your heart to Jesus Christ, there’s a book in heaven, and God puts your name in it. What a thrill that is. Would you pray this prayer with me, if you’re not certain that you’re saved. Would you pray, Lord Jesus—that’s right, just speak to Him—I need You and I want You. I want Your life in me. I want to know that my sin is forgiven. I want to know that I have fellowship with You. I want the joy that only You alone can give. I don’t want to go to hell. I want to go to heaven. But, on the way to heaven, I want joy. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your shed blood on the cross. I love You for that. Forgive me and cleanse me, and come into my life right now—right now, right now—and begin to make me the person You want me to be. And help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name. Amen.

Now, friend, look at me. If you prayed that prayer today and you meant it, here’s the next thing you ought to do. You ought to make it public. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” Walking a church aisle obviously couldn’t save anybody. Shaking hands with a minister can’t save anybody. It’s what it indicates that saves you. I mean, if you say, “I love Jesus, but I’m ashamed of Him,” you don’t really love Him. The faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. So, here’s what I’m going to ask. Friend, listen to me. We’re going to sing, “Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now,” and when we sing that, I want you to make your way to any of these aisles. They all lead down to the front. And I want you to say, if you can say it and mean

it, to the minister, “I am trusting Jesus.” That’ll sound so good in your mouth—“I’m trusting Jesus.”

“Well, what will happen then, Pastor?” Well, we will rejoice because you’re doing that. Secondly, we’ll give you some Scripture to stand on. Thirdly, we’ll answer any questions we can answer. Fourthly, we’ll seal it with you in prayer. It’ll take just a few moments. You’ll be treated quietly and courteously. If I could do it for you, I would, but I can’t.

Remember how the devil whispered to F. B. Meyer, “Don’t do it?” Well, the devil’s a liar. He didn’t suffer on a cross for you. He didn’t sweat blood in Gethsemane for you. Jesus is saying, “Come—come to Me.” Now, if you’re down here on this lower floor, there’ll be a minister at the head of each of these aisles. If you’re in the balcony and you’re coming to say yes to Jesus, look over there to my right and you’ll see a banner that says Redeemer. It’s to your left. And over here to my left, and your right, there’s one that says Messiah. A friend will be waiting there to receive you.

And those of you who know the Lord Jesus, be praying for those who don’t. And those of you who’ve asked Him into your heart, show that you mean it, that you’re not ashamed of Jesus.

Now, there’s another category I want to talk to for just a moment, and that’s those who need a church home, and you’re already saved, but you need a church home. Well, remember that a part of abiding is obedience? Now, not everybody should be a member of Bellevue, obviously, but everybody should be a member of a local New Testament church. And if you’re not obeying the Lord in that matter, as well as any matter, perhaps that’s the reason that the joy is lacking. So if you need a church home, joyful or not joyful, I want you to come. If you’re joyful or not joyful, but you need a church home, I want you to leave your seat and come forward, maybe even lead the way for these who are confessing Christ.

“Well, Pastor, if I’m coming to place my membership there, what should I say then?” That’s it! “I want to place my membership here,” and we’ll tell you how you may do it.

Respectfully, I’m going to ask that no one leave during the invitation, please. You may disturb others. Now, if it’s an emergency, of course you may leave. But be in a spirit of prayer. In just a few moments, we’ll come to the benediction. But let’s stand right now for prayer.

Bow your heads in prayer, and join me in prayer for these who ought to come today and say yes to Jesus Christ. Our heavenly Father, we pray in the strong name of Jesus that You would bless this invitation and that many will say an everlasting yes to Christ and to His church. Amen, amen. You step out right now as we sing.

How to Have Fullness of Joy

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 21, 2004

Main Scripture Text: John 15:11

Outline

Introduction

I. The Joy of Jesus

II. The Recipe for Joy

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, I've asked you to be turning to John chapter 15. I trust you've done that. If not, I want you to do it. And look up here and let me tell you this. There are a lot of things I don't know about you, a lot of things you don't know about me, but one thing I know about you, and it is true of me—you want joy. Now, don't say you don't. Not only do you want joy, you need joy. And I'm going to tell you today from the Word of God how to have fullness of joy.

There was a woman who lost her car keys. Have you ever done that? And she looked all over the house for her car keys—this place, that place, this drawer, that drawer, this pocket, that pocket. Finally, she looked in her purse, and there they were. Now, why didn't she find them earlier? She was looking in the wrong place. Simple.

The reason that some people don't have joy is they are looking for it in the wrong place. Now, if you are a Christian walking in the Spirit, you are to have conspicuous joy, conscience joy, continual joy, contagious joy. That is your legacy. And not only is it a nicety, it is a necessity, if you're going to live the Christian life, friend, number one in winning the lost. Do you know one of your greatest tools of evangelism is joy, where people see the joy in your life. Most of the people that we go to work with tomorrow, or we will meet somewhere in school or wherever, they are really not all that concerned about going to heaven or hell; they want to know how to hack it on Monday. And if you have that joy unspeakable and full of glory, you're going to make a difference. You know what David said in Psalm 52? "Lord, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted unto thee." But you're not going to win people to Jesus if you go around looking like an advance agent for the undertaker. And you say, "Don't you want to be a Christian so you can be as miserable as I?" They say, "No, thank you, I have enough problems of my own. Thank you very

much.” But in winning the lost, you need joy.

I tell you something else that you need joy for: not only in winning the lost, but you need joy to give you strength to live the Christian life. Now, on the one hand, the Christian life is simple, and I’m going to tell you how to abide in Jesus. But you can’t do that without joy, and you can’t have joy without abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know what God said to Nehemiah when he was building the walls around Jerusalem and they were getting tired? He said—listen to this—“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Joy will take the weariness out of work. Joy will take a burden and turn it into a blessing. And you’re not going to have the effectiveness in your work and the longevity and the fruitfulness, if you don’t have joy and let that joy be your strength.

I’ll tell you what else you need joy for, and that’s just to bear the burdens and the heartaches of life. Now, we all have them. Sooner or later, that burden, that heartache will come. You say, ‘Pastor Rogers, don’t talk to me about joy this morning. You don’t have any problems. If you knew the problems that I have, the heartaches, the tears, the fears, the report that I got from the doctor, the financial reverses that I have, the way my grandchildren have forgotten me, the way my children treat me, how my husband walked off and left me, you wouldn’t have the nerve to stand up here and tell me that I ought to have joy.’ Well, friend, in the scripture that I’m going to share with you in just a moment, Jesus said when He was facing the cross—first of all, dark Gethsemane and then bloody Calvary, and it was then that Jesus gave these words; I want you to listen to them—John chapter 15 and verse 11, one verse: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” The words of Jesus. Now, I know you have difficulty. So do I. But Jesus, again, facing the cross, spoke of His joy. Now, sometimes Christians, forget that.

I heard about a church prayer meeting where a little group were huddled in the church basement, praying. They said, “Now, Lord, be with us down here while we’re praying and the rest of our members are out there in the world having a good time.” We get that idea sometime, you know, that church is, how tedious and tasteless are the hours. It ought not to be that way. It ought to be hallmark in church service that we have joy, conspicuous, continual, conscience, contagious joy.

Let me give you three steps to having this kind of joy, or three facts that I want you to learn about this kind of joy, and they’re going to come out of verse 15, so I want you to look at it.

I. The Joy of Jesus

First of all, let’s think about the joy of Jesus. He said, “Now, that my joy might be in you.” You see that? “That my joy…” Not joy like His, but supernaturally His joy in us. Not

some sort of a cheap, tin imitation of His joy, but the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what is this joy like? First of all, it was abounding joy. Write it down: abounding joy. He didn't have a little joy; He had abounding joy. He didn't have halfway joy. The Bible says in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus said to God the Father, "Thou hast anointed me with the oil of gladness above my fellows." Nobody's had joy like the Lord Jesus—nobody. "Above thy fellows."

Now, the word gladness is the same word that's translated joy over there in the Book of Jude, and there it's translated exceeding joy. Let's read it this way: "Thou hast empowered me, you have anointed me with exceeding joy, more than any other." Don't get the idea that Jesus was some sort of a pale, sanctimonious, religious recluse. Jesus' life was a life of joy. This word literally, the word gladness there and found in Hebrews, is the word that it's root means leaping and dancing. Can you imagine Jesus leaping and dancing for joy? He did. There at the wedding in Cana, Jesus was the life of the party. Think of Jesus as the joyful Christ. "Well," you say, 'Pastor Rogers, didn't He have sorrow?' Of course He did. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That doesn't mean, however, that you cannot have joy, even in the midst of your grief. As I told you before, Jesus is facing the cross, and yet He is speaking of this joy. And it was a life of abounding joy.

Let me give you some verses. John chapter 17, verse 13—and Jesus is praying, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." That's what Jesus' prayer for His church is—that His joy might be fulfilled in you.

Let me give you another verse there. Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." Now, you rejoice in the Lord always: the good times, the bad times, the heartaches, the tears, the joy, the happiness, financial reverses, financial success, whenever. Youth, old age, middle age. Youth looks forward. Old age looks backward. Middle age just looks worried. You're to have the joy of the Lord in all of these things.

Now, many of us remember when we were coming up as children we had to have memory verses. What's the one that many of us remember? "Jesus wept." We love that. It was the shortest verse in the English Bible, "Jesus wept." But it is not the shortest word in the Greek Bible. The shortest verse in the Greek Bible is, "Rejoice evermore"—"Rejoice evermore." Now, what that is talking about now is the shortest verse but the longest period. "Rejoice evermore." And so, the joy that we're to have, friend, is the joy of the Christian life. We're to rejoice in the Lord. So it's His joy. Not joy like His, but His joy. And His joy was abounding joy, the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Second thing: not only was His love abounding joy, but His love was abiding joy—abiding. Look, if you will now, in John 15, verse 11, again: "These things have I spoken

unto you, that my joy might—here it is—remain in you, and that your joy might be full”—that my joy might remain in you. Now, again, we’re not talking about happiness. Happiness is wonderful. I like to be happy, and so do you.

We just called a grandson overseas this morning, little Stephen Paul. It’s his birthday, and we sang “Happy Birthday to You.” Happiness is a wonderful thing, but friend, happiness and joy are not the same. Now, while happiness is good, there is a difference. You see, listen. Happiness depends upon what happens. That’s why we call it happiness. Now, if your life is linked to happiness, you’re going to become a prisoner of circumstances because there are going to be some unhappy things that are going to come to you. You’re going to go to the doctor and get a bad report, or you’re going to have somebody to betray you, or you’re going to have the loss of material things. No. You see, happiness deals with circumstances; joy comes from the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord always.” The only way you can rejoice always is to rejoice in the Lord, because He never changes. Circumstances change.

Now, listen. Happiness is a cosmetic, and most of us look a lot better with a happy face. I’ve seen, you know, some better looking faces on bottles of iodine, and I’ve seen some who claim to know the Lord. But you don’t have to go around always with a grin on your face. Jesus wept. There was sorrow, even to the point of agony and sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, but through it all He spoke of His joy. Happiness is like a cosmetic. It deals with the outward thing. Joy deals with the inward character. Happiness meets surface needs; joy meets our deepest needs. Happiness is like a thermometer. It registers conditions. Joy is like a thermostat. It controls conditions. Now, happiness and joy sometimes come together. Those are wonderful moments. When your life is filled with happiness, the circumstances are good, and in all that you know the joy of the Lord, and happiness and joy are together like that, that’s a wonderful time. But sometimes when happiness goes away, joy is intensified because that’s all you have, and you have to depend upon Jesus. You see, joy is not the subtraction of problems from your life; it is the addition of the supernatural power of God. Now, it’s so important that you understand this about joy. It does not depend upon circumstances. It is abiding joy.

Now, let me give you some verses. You might want to jot these down. First of all, the Bible teaches that this joy is steadfast in sorrow. And put this verse down. Write that down and then put this verse down, John chapter 16 and verse 20: “your sorrow shall be turned into joy”—“your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” Isn’t that a great? That’s what Jesus said.

Not only is it steadfast in sorrow, but it is triumphant in tribulation. Do you have tribulation? Of course you do, if you’re a Christian, or even if you’re unsaved. Jesus

said, “In this world you will have tribulation.” Well, if you have tribulation, that means that you know you need joy. Look, if you will, in this particular verse of Scripture that I want to give you. In 2 Corinthians 7, verse 4, the Apostle Paul said, “I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” Here were Paul and Silas in this dark, dismal prison, after having been beaten in there, with sewage on the floor, hungry, cold, bleeding, suffering tribulation, yet Paul says, “Look, I am exceedingly joyful in all of our tribulation.” Listen.

Joy, beloved, is lasting in losses. Look in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 34—the Bible says, “and you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods”—“you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.” That’s Hebrews 10, verse 34.

Suppose you came from church to go to your house and it’s burned to the ground? Or suppose somebody came into your house and took all of your valuables out today, spoiled your goods? Suppose your automobile wrecks, or you wreck it, and you’ve let your insurance lapse? Suppose tomorrow morning when you pick up the newspaper you find out that where you put all your investments was a bad investment and you’ve lost everything? Can you have joy? You suffered joyfully the spoiling of your goods.

Now, if your goods are taken away, if your job, your finances, your house, your car, and you lose your joy, you were getting your joy in the wrong place. You were getting your joy in those things. And how do I know? Because when they were taken away, your joy went. But those saints to whom the Scripture is speaking, they rejoiced, even the spoiling of their goods. This joy is lasting in losses.

Now, next, it is abundant in affliction. We all have affliction. But put this verse down—1 Thessalonians 1:6: “having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.” Much affliction, joy of the Holy Ghost. You’re going to be afflicted if you love the Lord Jesus Christ. You’re going to be despised, looked down upon. We need to stop trying to win popularity contests. It is getting more and more that way as the days get darker. You’re going to be afflicted, but the Holy Ghost of God will give you supernatural joy. This joy, the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ, is—listen—it is abounding joy and it is abiding joy. Abounding joy, greater than any other joy. And it is abiding joy, “that my joy might remain in you.”

Third thing I want you to notice: this joy is abundant joy. Not only is it abounding; it is abundant. What’s the difference? Abounding speaks of the quality of the joy; abundant speaks of how much joy there is. It is abundant joy. “These things have I written unto you, that my joy might be in you, and you’re your job might be full.” Fullness of joy; joy unspeakable and full of glory. And it is abundant.

II. The Recipe for Joy

But now, here’s the key, and I want you to listen carefully. Look again in verse 11 in

chapter 15. Jesus begins that phrase with this phrase: “These things have I spoken unto you that you might have joy.” Now, if you’re any kind of a student of the Bible, when you read something like that, your mind is going to say, “Well, what did He say?” I mean, here’s the recipe for joy if I read verse 11 and I don’t read the things that He spoke. He said, “These things have I spoken unto you that you might have joy.” So I’ve got to go back and see what it was that Jesus spoke. Jesus said something to them, and then He said, “Now, listen. I told you this that you might have joy.”

Well, if you go back to the earlier part of John 15, you’re going to find out that Jesus is using the parable of the vine, a grapevine, and the branches. And Jesus is saying in that parable, “Look, I am like the vine. You are like the branches.” Look in verse 5: “I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.” Now, what Jesus is saying is the secret of joy is to abide in Him, just like a branch does a vine. Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, that’s all fine, but you’re using these religious words—abiding. I don’t know what abiding is.” Well, let’s look again in the context.

You want to abide? If you want joy, you’re going to have to abide. “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” What does it mean to abide?

Number one—and I want you to write these four words down—number one: It means surrender—surrender. That’s very important that you understand this—a full surrender. Look in verse 4: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”

Now, a branch has no side issues—none! It has one concern, and that is to stay connected with the vine and be yielded to the purposes of the vine. The branch does not exist for itself. You have one overarching, overmastering goal in your life, and that is to be totally, completely surrendered to Jesus Christ. You say, ‘Well, I have to make a living, having to love my family. I have to keep my body in condition.’ Yes, all of those are sub-sets of the main, overarching, overruling desire of your life—to surrender to Jesus Christ.

There was a great preacher from England of yesteryear. His name was Dr. F. B. Meyer. You can go into our library today and find some wonderful devotional books by F. B. Meyer. F. B. Meyer told how he received the joy of the Lord, because he’d been a minister, but he did not have the joy that I’m talking about this morning. He said, “I was at a particular place, and a young man spoke, and it was very obvious that young man had something I did not have. He had joy.” Meyer said, “I went to him that night and I said, ‘Sir, can you share with me the secret of what you have? There’s something missing in my life. Can you help me?’” Meyer wrote that, “This man looked at me and

said, 'Sir, have you made a full surrender of your life to Jesus Christ?'" F. B. Meyer said, "Well, in a general way, I have." This young man said, "I want you to go back and pray until you have given everything to Jesus Christ, surrendered it all." Meyer said, "I went that night to my room. I locked the door. I got on my knees, and I said I am not going to get up until I have made a complete surrender to the Lord." And he said, "I began to pray, and it seemed as if I had in my hand a great bunch of keys that represent the concerns of my life. And I held them up to the Lord, and I said, 'There, Lord, take them.' The Lord said, 'Are they all there?' He said, 'All except for one, small key. It can't be of much use." And he heard the Lord saying to him, "If you cannot trust me with everything, you cannot trust me with anything." Meyer went through a battle, and the devil whispered to him and said, "Don't give Him that key. If you surrender everything, no telling what He'll ask you to do. Don't give it to Him." Meyer said, "I went through a struggle, so much that I took in my mind that bunch of keys and held them up to the Lord, and said, God, I can't give You that last key, but, Lord, I'm willing for You to take it. And the Lord reached down and took that bunch of keys. And He took that smallest key and He went to a cabinet and unlocked the cabinet." And Meyer said, "I saw there the vileness and the filth of my sin." And he said, "I said, O God, I repent of that. I'm sorry of that. Forgive me. I give You every key." He said the Lord cleansed him, and the Lord even took away the desire right there for that thing. And he said, "I went to bed that night thinking that when I woke up in the morning I would be shouting hallelujahs." But he said, "It wasn't that way." He said, "I woke up in the morning with a serenity and a peace in my heart," and he said, "I found myself saying all day long, 'I am His, I am His, I am completely His.'" Isn't that wonderful? Now, have you done that, or you've got some little key, and you're saying, "Now, Lord, this is my private business"? I want to tell you that a branch has no private business—none! The branch exists for the vine.

So, I want you to make the word surrender on your list. Put it down—surrender.

Now, the second word I want you to put down is the word dependence, because when you surrender, you must depend. Look, again, in verse 5 of this chapter: "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit—now, watch this phrase—for without me you can do nothing."

Question: What can a branch do without a vine? Think about it. Nothing! It's just a twig. It will wither. It will die. The branch is completely, totally dependent upon the vine. Are you totally dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, Jesus said, "without me you can do nothing." He didn't say you can't chop wood. He didn't say you can't build a house, you can't drive a car. But all of that in eternity amounts to nothing. You say, "Well, I think I can do something." May I say. that's your opinion! That isn't what Jesus Christ said. Jesus said, "Nothing!" That's a zero with the edges trimmed off. Nothing!

Nothing counts until you're dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you receive the life, the nurture of the Lord Jesus Christ into you. You learn to depend upon Jesus.

Now, what we're doing is we're talking about how to abide. You want to abide so you can have joy? Number one: surrender. Got it? Number two: dependence.

Number three: Rest—rest fullness. Look, if you will, in verse 9: Here's what He says in verse 9: "As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." Now, when you know now that you're continuing In His love, that He is overshadowing you, that He is taking care of you, you can rest in the Lord.

I see so many nervous Christians today. They remind me of a man who swallowed a whole egg, and he was afraid to move, that it might break, and afraid to sit still, that it might hatch. There are Christians like that. They're nervous, frustrated, running around. The life of abiding is rest. Not passivity, but rest fullness.

Suppose a man and a branch get into a conversation, and the branch says to the man, "You look nervous and frustrated." He says, "Well, I am." The man says to the branch, "You look at rest." He said, "I am." The man says to the branch, "What is your secret?" "Oh," he said, "I have reduced all of my concerns to one concern. I realize that I am to surrender to the vine. I'm dependent upon the vine. So, having done that, I rest in the vine. When it's summer and I need moisture to cool my tongue, I don't worry about where it's going to come from. I abide in the vine, and the vine sends his roots down deep into the ground and brings me water. And in the springtime when I need buds, I don't worry about where I'm going to get the buds. I don't produce them anyway. I just bear them. They belong to the life of the vine, and so I abide in the vine, and, ipso facto, the buds come." All right now, what he is saying is this: "That if I need buds, I abide." And then he said, "In the fall time, in the time of the harvest, the vintage, when I need fruit and grapes, I don't worry about that. I don't worry about how many, how large; I don't worry about the flavor or the color. None of my business. I don't produce the fruit. I bear the fruit. The vine produces the fruit."

Have you ever read over there in Galatians chapter 5, verse 20? The fruit of the Spirit is joy. It's fruit. You have that joy, but how do you get that joy? Jesus said, "Abide, surrender, dependence, rest." These are ways to learn how to abide.

And then, here's one you may not like, but it goes in this same passage with abiding. Number four: write down the word obedience. Same context—John chapter 15 and verse 10: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." Now, verse 9 spoke of His love, that we abide in His love. Well, how do you abide in His love? Keep His commandments.

You see, the only part of the Bible that you really believe is what you obey; the rest is just religious talk. And you want the Lord Jesus to be real to you? Do you want this

joy unspeakable and full of glory?” He said earlier in the Gospel of John, “He that loveth me, keeps my commandments, and I and my Father will manifest ourselves to him.” Do you want Jesus to be real to you? Keep His commandments. Do you want to have joy? Keep His commandments. You say, ‘Well, I’d rather have something else. I’d rather have my own way.’ Well, that’s your choice, but you’re the loser. I’m telling you that life is meaningless without joy. And you cannot have joy till you abide. And you cannot abide until you obey.

It is a life of surrender. It is a life of dependence. It is a life of rest. And it is a life of obedience. Now, when you do all of that, precious friend, what is the end result? It is a life of rejoicing, and we come right back to where we started—verse 11: “These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Now, the only way to have that joy is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and to abide in Him.

Conclusion

I want to tell you something. You can be saved and not have joy. David said, “Lord, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” He didn’t say, “Restore my salvation.” He said, “Lord, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” If you don’t have joy, you’re going to heaven second-class; you really are.

Well, how do you get started? Well, Jesus said in the Gospels, “Rejoice that your name is written in heaven.” When you receive Jesus Christ, in heaven’s ledger your name is written down, your birth certificate. You are in the family of God. And then, for the first time, you can abide because you’re in Christ. Now, a branch is not connected to the vine, can’t abide in it. How do you get connected to Jesus Christ to receive Him as your Lord and Savior? “Well, Pastor, will He save me?” I will guarantee you. Listen. Look at me. I will guarantee you, on the authority of the Word of God, that if you will trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—listen—He will save you, He will; yes, He will. And, furthermore, He will keep you. He will see you all the way through. He will never, no never, no never, no never leave you nor forsake you. Now, you must receive Him personally as your Lord and Savior, and I want to help you to do that, so bow your heads in prayer.

And if you don’t have the assurance that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, I want us to get it settled this morning. And you can settle it right there where you are in your seat, for the Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” and you are whosoever. So why don’t you pray this way: Lord Jesus, You are the vine. I want to be a branch. I want to be a part of You. I want to receive Your life into me. I need joy and I need heaven. Lord Jesus, You paid my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for doing it. You rose from the dead. I believe it. You promised to

save me, and You want to save me if I will trust You. I do trust You. Tell Him that. I do trust You right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Do it with all of your heart. Lord Jesus, I mean business. I do. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus. Pray it. And then pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, I'm weak; You're strong, so put Your life into me, just as a vine does a branch. I can't do anything without You. But, Lord Jesus, begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Help me, Lord Jesus, just to continue to abide in You. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make this public. Pray that, friend. Give me the courage to make it public. Pray it and mean it. Not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. Precious friend, if you prayed that prayer, I want you to do something very wonderful. I want you today to acknowledge your faith in Jesus. The way we're going to do it this morning is this: we're going to give a public invitation for you to leave your seat and come here to the front. And your coming is saying, "Yes, I am believing in Jesus. I'm trusting Jesus." Standing across the front of the church in just a moment in every aisle will be a minister of our church. If you're in the balcony, a minister will be under that banner over there to my right and your left that says Redeemer, or over here to my left and your right that says Messiah to welcome those of you who'll be coming from the balcony. And we're going to sing a song that says, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive—now, listen to this next phrase—Lord, I confess You now." I'm not talking about making a speech. Your very coming outwardly, openly, publicly is your way of acknowledging Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

"Pastor, I've never done that. I don't know what to do when I go down there?" Well, I suggest you say this if you can, and mean it: "I am trusting Jesus." That'll sound so good in your heart. If you've just prayed and trusted Him, say it! Don't be afraid to say it. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Say, "I am trusting Jesus."

"Well, what will happen then?" Well, we'll rejoice. We'll give you some Scripture to stand on. We'll answer any questions that we can answer, and we will seal it with you in prayer.

Now, walking an aisle doesn't save you. It's what it indicates that saves you, that you're not ashamed of Jesus, because He said, "If you're ashamed of me and my word, then I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." But Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before me, I'll confess you before my Father in heaven."

So if you prayed that prayer, I don't want you to look around to see what anyone else does. I want you to come if no one else. I want you to come if everyone else does. You do what Jesus would have you to do, and you'll be abundantly, exceedingly glad you did.

Now, let me say a word to those of you who may have prayed and received Christ before this service. If you have never made it public, you have cheated yourself of joy, for the Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” So you may have been saved when you came in here before I ever started to preach. And I want to invite you to come forward and let it be known openly and publicly that you’re trusting Jesus.

If you need baptism, we’ll make an appointment for your baptism.

There are others of you who need a church home. I want to invite you to Bellevue. It’s a wonderful church. And if you are not a member of some church somewhere, you’re living in disobedience. And, remember, to abide is to obey. So may I lovingly invite you, if you need a church home. Maybe you just recently moved here, haven’t even had time to find a church home. Well, if God speaks to your heart here, may I lovingly invite you to come, and you know that you’re saved, you come and say, “I want to...” Well, here’s, here’s what you can say: “I want to place my membership here.” That’s easy. “I want to place my membership here.” And we’ll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church.

Now, in just a moment, we’re going to stand and pray, and I want all of you that need to make this public, in the balcony or down here... And if you already know the Lord, begin to pray for those around about you. If you’re with a friend and you’re close enough to that friend, you may volunteer to come forward with that friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus.

Respectfully, I’m going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. You may disturb others.

But let’s stand together now for prayer. Now, church, let’s pray. The ministers are coming now to receive you. In just a moment, the deacons will come to pray for you and to help you in any way that they can, but let’s pray. Lord God, speak to hearts today. Help men and women and little children—little children—to say yes to Jesus and to His church. Lord, draw people to Yourself. In Your holy name. Amen.

“Lord, I believe...” Let’s sing it.

A Family of Friends

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 20, 1994

Main Scripture Text: John 15:12–17

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”

JOHN 15:12

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding John chapter 15, if you would, please. In a moment, we begin in verse 12. We have been praying and planning about this year's work, and the emphasis this year for our church, and we have felt that God has blessed us so much. As a matter of fact, the blessings of God upon Bellevue could almost be the danger, that we come on Sunday, and Sunday by Sunday, and our teachers, and our workers, and our musicians, and all, present such a wonderful program, that we come and enjoy it, and go home, and wait for the next service, and come and enjoy that, and go home. And we're not shouldering the load. We are not becoming a part. We're almost in danger of becoming a congregation of spectators. And we're being so blessed that we fail to remember that there are so many others who need Jesus, so many out there who are hurting, so many who do not enjoy the blessings, the friendship, the warmth, the love that we enjoy. And we said, "How can we, as pastor and staff, how can we just put our arms around the congregation, and then enable this congregation to put its arm around this community?" What are we trying to get across? Well, first of all, family.

Bellevue is a family. It's a family church. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I live alone." That's all the more reason you need the Bellevue family, because we are your extended family. And, whether you have a great big family sitting around your dinner table, or whether you live by yourself in an apartment or in a room somewhere, Bellevue is family. But it is more than family; it's friendship. And the two longings that people have in our world today are for family—a sense of belonging; and for friendship—a sense of caring. And so, we've just said that we're going to call the church to a new emphasis, and that emphasis—and you're going to be hearing it more and more—is this: A Family of Friends.

We gave you a video tape—you remember the video tape?—to share with other people and tell other people about Bellevue, a family of friends. Many of you have done that. We've received extraordinary blessings, and others have been reached for Christ just through the sharing of that video tape. If you have one, don't let it be gathering dust. Get it out. Be loaning it, because it tells what we're about, and it invites people to be a part of this friendship. But the tape itself can never take the place of what I'm going to ask you to do and be tonight, and teach you the value of friendship—of having a friend, and being a friend, and making Bellevue Baptist Church, in the deepest sense of the word, a family of friends.

We've asked you on family nights in the presentations at the Singing Tree; we've asked at the Passion Play to invite your friends. Bring your friends. Love your friends. Encourage your friends. Be a friend to these who need Jesus, and these who need the ministry of this church. So the title of the message tonight is simply this: A Family of Friends.

Look, if you will, please now, in John 15, verse 12. Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Now He didn't say this is optional. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another..." And not merely love one another, but love one another with the love that Jesus has for us, "...as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And what did He command us? To love one another. Don't call yourself a friend of Jesus if you don't love me. I cannot call myself a friend of Jesus if I do not love you. He has commanded us to love one another. And then He said, "You're my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." That is, "I have shared with you the intimate secrets of the family." "You've not chosen me, but I have chosen you..."—that is, we're His friend, because He first sought us—"...and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give

it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

Now I want every one of us to listen tonight, and I want you to listen carefully, whether you're young or old, a longtime Bellevuer or a brand new Bellevuer. It is our responsibility, our duty, our privilege, to obey the Lord Jesus Christ when He has commanded us to love one another and to share His friendship. Listen to your pastor. One of the greatest needs that human beings have is to have a friend and to be a friend. That's one of the deepest human needs. The Bible has so much to say about friendship. And one of our greatest privileges is to call Jesus Christ our friend.

I. The Characteristics of Friendship

Now, there are three things I want you to notice tonight. I want you to notice, first of all, the characteristics of friendship. What is true friendship? There are three things that a friend will do for you. A friend sharpens, a friend sticks, and a friend stabs. You say, “It doesn't sound like a friend to me.” Pay attention.

A. A Friend Sharpens

A friend sharpens. Proverbs chapter 27, verse 17: “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” A friend sharpens. A friend will put the keen edge on your life. A friend will make you a keener person. You see, there is something about true friendship that ennobles, enables, and enriches all of us. Conversely, a false friend, an untrue friend, a wrong friend, will blunt your life, will dull your relationship with Almighty God.

There was a man in the Bible whose name was Amnon. Amnon had a sexual addiction. He had a sickness. As a matter of fact, he had a beautiful half-sister whose name was Tamar. And Amnon began to lust after Tamar, and wanted to commit a horrible sin against her. And he got to moping around about it. I'm going to read it to you from the Bible: “And it came to pass after this, that Absalom, the son of David, had a fair sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon, the son of David, loved her. And Amnon was so vexed that he fell sick for his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin. And Amnon thought it hard for him to do anything to her.” That is, how am I going to do this nefarious thing that I want to do? But now, listen to this: “But Amnon had a friend...”—now, put the word friend in quotation marks—“...he had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, and Jonadab was a very subtle man.” Now, notice the words “Amnon had a friend...” Now, here was Amnon, who wanted to express his lust. His conscience said, “What you're about to do is wrong!” But he had a subtle friend, and his subtle friend, the Bible says, talked to him, and encouraged him to do a very terrible, terrible thing. What his friend said is this: “Amnon, look, you're a king's son. You can get away with it. Pretend you're sick. And when your half-sister comes into the room, then you can do what you want to do to her.” And the story is so

sordid that I just want to end right there talking about that. But here's the truth of the matter—is that Amnon had a friend that was not a true friend.

I want all you boys and girls in the choir to listen to me. I want all you college students to listen to me. I want all of you young married couples to listen to me tonight. Anybody who calls themselves a friend of yours and encourages you to impurity, encourages you to sin, encourages you to drink, encourages you to stay away from the house of God, or whatever it is, is not a friend of yours. So many people today have lost their purity. They've gotten into drugs. They've been divorced. They're in jail. Why? Because of so-called friends. Parents, you'd better be careful about the company that your children keep. Anybody who makes it easier for you to do wrong is not a friend. Some of you here tonight are not saved. You need to be saved. And do you know that you would come down this aisle tonight and give your heart to Christ, except for one thing. You're wondering what your friends would think—what your friends would think. Anybody who keeps you from coming to Jesus is not a friend. If you're worried about what your friends would think, you need some new friends. A friend, a true friend, sharpens as iron sharpens iron. The word friend itself and the word freedom are both rooted in the same etymological source. A friend is somebody who liberates you, somebody who spurs you on, somebody who makes you better. Jesus is my best heavenly friend. Joyce is my best earthly friend. I'm so grateful for those two friends. I am so grateful that I am married to a lady who constantly encourages me, who prays for me, who sharpens me, who's not afraid to challenge me about things that are right and wrong. As iron sharpens iron, so a man's countenance sharpens the countenance of his friend.

I have friends in the ministry, one of my richest gifts—the friends in the ministry and the friends on this church staff who are in the ministry. And these are people that constantly encourage me. I have other preacher friends that are not on this staff, but when I'm with them I cannot be with them for two or three minutes but what I'm encouraged to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have a dear friend in Florida. His name is Joe Boatwright. If I'm with Joe Boatwright for two or three minutes, he's already given me a blessing. He's given me a word. He has given me an encouragement. He has, in some way, challenged me. I have a dear friend called Peter Lord. I cannot be with Peter Lord for two or three minutes but what I am challenged, encouraged, strengthened in the Lord. Thank God for friends like that. Do you have friend like that? Are you that kind of a friend? A friend sharpens. Jesus is that kind of a friend.

B. A Friend Sticks

But not only does a friend sharpen; a friend sticks. Let me give you a proverb—Proverbs chapter 17, verse 17: “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for

adversity.” Proverbs 18, verse 24: “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” A friend sharpens. A friend sticks. A true friend will stay with you. All of us have acquaintances. We call them friends. They’re not friends. Our life is like a ship sailing, and they get on board and ride a while, and then they get off. They’re acquaintances. We have other people. They may seem like friends, but they’re fair-weather friends. They get on board. And, as long as the sailing is smooth, they ride along with us. But let us get into rough seas, and they jump overboard, and leave us. But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. By the way, if you want to find out who your true friends are, your real friends are, get down on your luck or make a mistake—make a mistake; not a little one, a big one—and see if they are there. Somebody has said that a friend is somebody who walks in when the world walks out. That’s what a friend is. That’s the kind of a friend that Jesus is. Jesus said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” If we deny Him, yet He abides faithful. Isn’t He a wonderful friend? And you need a friend like that—somebody who not only sharpens, but somebody who sticks. The Bible says here that there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

C. A Friend Stabs

And I want to tell you the third thing—and I hate to mention it, but it is true. A friend not only sharpens and sticks, but he stabs. A friend does that. The Bible says, in Proverbs 27 and verse 6: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend—faithful are the wounds of a friend—but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Jesus loves us enough to convict us when we do wrong. Jesus loves us enough to confront us when we do wrong.

I see this silly ad. I guess it’s silly. There a modicum of truth in it. But friends don’t let friends drive drunk. You see that ad? Friends don’t let friends get drunk. That’s the fallacy in that whole thing. I mean, these liquor people give me a pain I can’t locate. Sometimes I do.

A friend loves enough to confront. A friend will sometimes stab you with the arrow of conviction lovingly, but they love you too much not to speak to you face to face to help you. I have friends in this church who sometimes put their arm on my shoulder, and say, “Pastor, here’s something that I think you need to know.” Maybe I don’t like to hear it. Nobody likes to be stuck. Nobody likes to be stabbed. But we need to hear it. We need to challenge one another lovingly, kindly. You know, the problem with false friends—there are two of them—flattery and hypocrisy. Do you know the difference between a flatterer and a hypocrite? A flatterer says to your face what he doesn’t say behind your back. A hypocrite says behind your back what he won’t say to your face. Flattery and hypocrisy are dangerous and deleterious to friendship. But a true friend—a true friend—is somebody who will challenge you. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend,” the Bible says, “but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Kisses of an enemy—that’s the flatterer who says to your face what he will not say behind your back. Judas pretended to be a

friend of Jesus, but he was not a true friend in that truest sense of the word.

Now, that's the characteristics of friendship. I want you to begin to cultivate people. Cultivate people for Christ. Cultivate them for their sake, and for your sake. Real friendships are built. There are no rush orders. A friendship is not like a mushroom; it's more like an oak tree.

II. The Cultivation of a Friendship

Now, there are five secrets in building and cultivating a friendship, but all five of these secrets come out of one great principle. Now here's the principle: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Luke 16:31: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Now that's the principle. Let me give you the five illustrations of that, or five basic secrets. Here are five things that are true of people. And if you want to be a friend, and if you want to have friends, you want to have a better personality, you want to be a more loveable person, you want to help people, encourage people, here are five basic rules. Here are five basic things that people want.

A. People Want to Be Accepted

Number one: People want to be accepted. People want to be accepted. Now, Jesus accepted the disciples. Remember that we talked to you about grace? And we said that grace is God's acceptance of us. Ephesians 1:6: "...He made us accepted in the beloved." People want to be accepted not because they're perfect. Nobody's perfect except the Lord Jesus. But people need to know, "Look, hey, I accept you like you are." You don't have to change for me to accept you—not what you do, but accept you. People want to be accepted.

B. People Want to Be Acknowledged

Number two: People want to be acknowledged. They want to be recognized. The road to their heart is often right through their ear. You know, we need to listen to people. Look them right in the eye. If you're talking to a person, give them your full attention. Listen to every word that they say. Make them feel like you really care. You acknowledge their presence.

One man said to another man about his wife, he said, "You know, I'm worried about my wife." Said, "She just goes around always talking, always talking." Well, the guy said, "Well, what does she say?" He says, "Well, I don't really know. She thinks I'm listening to her." Your wife needs to be listened to. My wife needs to be listened to.

I was doing some study. And of all adult communication, 9% is in writing, 16% is in reading, 30% is in talking, and 45% is in listening. One of the primary ways of communicating and making friendships is to listen. Now, many people are spending a

lot of money with psychiatrists and psychologists, but do you know what that we've found out? We've found out that in counseling, in helping people, that in many, if not most cases, a person with a sympathetic ear who will simply listen, who will simply acknowledge somebody, who will simply say, "I care about you," can do the same good as somebody who's highly skilled and trained. Not always, but many times. To actively listen, to give your heart to someone, is a Godlike quality. Psalm 34:15: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." That's a Godlike quality. Psalm 116:1: "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplication." When we listen to another person, what we're saying to that other person is, "I acknowledge you. You are important to me."

C. People Want to Be Appreciated

Now here's a third thing people want. People want to be accepted. People want to be acknowledged. People want to be appreciated. If you say you don't want to be appreciated, I'm going to tell you, I think you're not telling the truth. William James, a psychologist, said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." Mark Twain said he could live three weeks on a compliment.

Now, the apostle Paul was a godly man. And the apostle Paul had some stern things that he had to say in some of his epistles. But, if you will, read the epistles of the apostle Paul, you'll find out that when he would begin these epistles, as a general rule, he would say something good and something wonderful about the church. Even the church at Corinth, the other churches, his carnal church, he had something good to affirm them in, to appreciate them, which brings me to the next thing.

D. People Want to Be Affirmed

Not only do they want to be appreciated; they need to be affirmed. We live in a negative world. Most of the people who cannot affirm other people are people who themselves have a poor self-image, and they need somebody to affirm them.

We're having a great increase in teenage suicides. Do you know why we have teenager suicides? It's because we have so many latchkey kids, so many kids whose parents now are interested in everything else except affirming these children. The children have a poor self-image. They're raised in a home where they need to be affirmed. And, you know what some of these kids think when they take their own life? They say, "Well, you know, if I would take my life, at least the kids at the campus will weep and wail because I am gone. Somebody will finally pay some attention to me." We're living in a world where everybody is put down. That doesn't mean that we need to approve everything that everybody does, but listen to Proverbs 11:9: "A hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." A paraphrase of that is, "Evil words destroy; godly skills rebuild." Evil words destroy.

I've told you before that one of the things that I appreciate about my friend, Joyce, is that she encourages me. From time to time when I'll go away, I'll unfold my socks in my suitcase, and I can find a note in there that says, "I love you. You will do good. God bless you. I'm praying for you." Encouragement. We all need it. People need to be affirmed.

E. People Want to Be Assured

And here's the fifth thing. People want to be assured. They want understanding. They want empathy. The Bible says, in Romans 12:15: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Find a way to let them know that you know, that you somehow understand what he or she is up against.

Henry Neouen writes this: "When we earnestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to you, we often find it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen, rather, to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand."

All of these are just ways of saying, "Do to others what you'd have others do to you." People want to be accepted. They want to be acknowledged. They want to be appreciated. They want to be affirmed. And they want to be assured. And if you will stop thinking about yourself so much and begin to think about other people in those realms, you're going to find out that you have become a friend and, therefore, have a friend.

III. The Cost of a Friendship

Now, the third thing. Think not only about the characteristics and the cultivation of friendship, but think with me about the cost of friendship. Friendships are costly. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Remember that verse I gave you from Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." It costs to love. Don't try to have too many friends. You'll bankrupt yourself. But be a friend.

C. S. Lewis, the very thoughtful and perceptive Christian, a very intelligent man, wrote some of the most poignant words about friendship. I've copied them down. I want you to listen to them. He said, and I quote, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully with hobbies and little luxuries. Avoid all entanglements. Lock it safe in a casket of your own selfishness. There it will not be broken. It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable." It costs to love.

Friends cost time, but all of us want friends. When we ask for time on their calendar, they don't consult their calendar at all. They just simply say, "I am available." It costs prayer. It costs energy. It costs disappointment. But it is worth it to us and to them.

Sometimes you're going to have to make a visit, a phone call, a gift, but there's the cost of friendship.

Conclusion

Now let me close the message tonight by saying this: That Jesus is the friend of all friends. You know, it was said of Abraham, the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven, that he was a friend of God. And everybody thought, how wonderful that Abraham was a friend of God. But, friend, we are friends of the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, Jesus is my friend. He is the One who has set me free to love and to be loved. And I shudder to think what my life, the life of the man named Adrian, would be, without the friendship of Jesus. I want to say this again, and it may sound corny, but I love Jesus. I love Jesus. He is a friend to me, as real as any man, and more real, than any man on this platform, a very warm and wonderful friend.

Now, if Jesus is not real to you, remember it is obedience to Jesus that seals that friendship. Friendship is a two-way road. Look in verse 14: "You're my friends if you do whatsoever I command you." What a wonderful intimacy grows out of that friendship. Verse 15: "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doing, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." All of us can't be friends to every person. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "A man of many friends will come to ruin." But Jesus is not a friend of all of us; He's a friend of each of us. Do you understand what I'm saying? Did you know that Jesus is my personal friend? I have all there is of Jesus just for me, and yet, you have all there is of Jesus just for you. Only God can do that. Only deity can do that. He loves us all, but, friend, He loves us each. He loves us individually. He cares for us. One of the most beautiful little phrases that I ever read was this: "That the great sun that holds the mighty planets in orbit ripens a little bunch of grapes like it had nothing else to do." And the God who runs this universe in and through Jesus Christ is your own personal friend. What a friend we have in Jesus!

We often sing this song: 'I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend! He loved me 'ere I knew Him; He drew me with the cords of love, and thus He bound me to Him. And round my heart still closely twine those ties which naught can sever, For I am His and He is mine forever and forever. I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend! He bled, He died to save me; But not alone the gift of life, but His own self He gave me. Naught that I have my own I call, I hold it for the Giver: My heart, my strength, my life, my all are His, and His forever.'

There are a lot of folks who've never met our friend, Jesus. And, you see, if He is your friend, and I trust He is, then He says, "You are my friends, if you do what I command you—that you love one another as I have loved you." And I want you to say,

“O God, help me to find someone that I can love and cultivate for Jesus. And help us to make our church a family of friends.”

When people come here, I don't want them to be impressed with the size, the bigness of this building. That's what happens to most folks. They come in here and they go, “Oooooohh.” You know what I want them to be impressed with? I want them to be impressed with the way we love one another: the bigness of our love, the warmth of our spirit. I want them to think of Bellevue Baptist Church as a family of friends. We have the best Friend. And if you've never met Him, I want you get to know Him tonight. If you would prayer like this, “O God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and 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, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me. Lord, I trust You to do it. Thank You for doing it. You're now my Lord, my God, my Savior, and my Friend. My Friend! I'll never be alone. The darkest night, the most lonely road, Lord Jesus, You're with me. And now, because I'm Yours, You're my elder Brother, God is my Father, and this church is my family. And we're a family a friends because of You.” Do you want Jesus?

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 2, 1990

Main Scripture Text: John 15:12–20

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

JOHN 15:15

Outline

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Introduction

Turn to John chapter 15, would you please. John chapter 15, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 12. Many, many years ago, Joyce and myself had a deep sorrow to come into our lives. We lost a baby. Well, we didn't really lose him because we know where he is. He's with Jesus. But a precious baby son named Philip. That little boy died on Mother's Day, one of those sudden crib deaths. And as Joyce and I consoled ourselves and drove to our parents' home in West Palm Beach on that Sunday afternoon, we worshipped and praised the Lord, and we sang together to the Lord, because that was the way we had of expressing our faith and trust in our Lord. And there was one song that I have sung many times, but had never ever meant as much to me as it did that Sunday afternoon, that Mother's Day, as we drove along singing, our eyes blinded with tears. But we sang that old song that you've sung many times, "What a Friend we Have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to Him in prayer."

I want to talk to you today about friendship with Jesus. What a friend we have in Jesus. Listen to this Scripture. "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as

I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: and whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that you love one another. 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 his own; but because you 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.”

Does the Lord Jesus have favorites? No, He doesn't have any favorites. With Him there is no respect of persons. But He does have intimates. He does have intimates. He does have those that He takes into His heart as His special beloved friends. What a privilege to have friendship with the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, “I call you friend...” Now I want us to think about that, dear friend. The greatest privilege we have is to be a friend of the Lord Jesus. Several wonderful and beautiful truths I want to give you. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. I hope you'll not miss them.

I. The Ennoblement of Friendship with Jesus

The very first is what I want to call the ennoblement, the ennoblement of friendship with Jesus. How, how ennobled we are to be called a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, if the President of the United States were to come to Memphis, Tennessee and say, “I need somebody's house to stay in,” and they chose your house, what an honor that would be for you. Suppose the President of the United States were to come to Memphis, Tennessee, as he did not some, so long ago, and he were to say, “I need someone to drive me around,” and you were chosen, you would be a servant of the President of the United States.

Now, regardless of your political affiliation, that would be a great, great, great honor to be a servant of the President. But, my dear friend, we are not mere servants of heaven's King; we are His intimates. We are His friends. What an ennobling that is that we should be called the friends of Jesus. You know, just to be a servant of the Lord Jesus is such an honor, such an honor; just that He would let us be His bondslaves. But He says, “I call you no more servants; I call you friends.”

The former pastor of this church, one of the former pastors was a man who was indeed a legend in his own time. Dr. Robert G. Lee. I loved Dr. Lee. I loved to hear him preach. As a matter of fact, the other day I put on a tape and just listened to a

magnificent message from Dr. Robert G. Lee. But as I was a college student and a seminary student, I was in great, great awe of the man called Robert G. Lee, the pastor of this church. And one day, Dr. Lee came to our seminary to speak. And I sat there. Always when Dr. Lee would speak, I'd find a seat there by the front row so I could get up there. *I wanted to be down by the spout where the glory comes out.* And I just got down there in the front just to listen to Dr. Lee preach.

And he had to go to the train station. He wasn't going to the airport, but to the train station, and they chose a student to drive him downtown. And guess who they chose? Me! I mean, I got to drive this man. I thought, *this is the greatest thing since sliced bread*, that I could drive this man down to the train station. And I put him in my raggedy old car and drove Dr. Robert G. Lee to the train station. See, I was his servant. And I counted it a privilege to be his servant.

Well, one day, and I've told you this before, but a college student came through college and back to our college. He said to me, "Adrian, guess what I did?" I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I went through Memphis, Tennessee and," he said, "I went in and saw Dr. Robert G. Lee." That so impressed me. It'd be like you saying, "Adrian, guess what I did? I went through Washington and dropped in and saw the President." I thought, *How did you get in to see him?* "How, how did you get in to see Dr. Lee?" He said, "Well, I, I asked his secretary and his secretary said I could go in and see him."

Well, I tried to conjure that up. I knew some churches had secretaries, but I didn't know that a pastor would have a secretary. And I couldn't figure out how she knew who he would see and who he wouldn't see. And I said, "Well, what did you all do?" He said, "Well, we talked a while and then he prayed for me." I thought, *Boy, you know, that's, that's so wonderful. I wish I could do that.* But I was a college student and I thought I'd never have that privilege of being in his office.

Well, the years came and went. And by the providence and the mercy and the goodness of God, I became the pastor of this same church while Dr. Lee was still alive. And I was sitting in that same office one day, and my secretary buzzed me on the intercom and she said "Pastor, Dr. Lee is outside. He wants to know if he can come in and see you for a few minutes." And, I said, "Yeah, let him in. It'll be all right," you know.

But, my dear friend, you know, it's good we don't know the future. It would blow our gaskets if we did, isn't that the truth? But, you know, I thought it was one thing to drive that man around, but it was another thing when I became his friend and he put his arm around me and called me pastor. He used to call me Pastor and pray for me.

Now, friend, listen. If we could just be the servants of Jesus; I mean, just the slaves of Jesus. But notice what He says here in His Word. He says in verse 15: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends...." Now remember He's talking to Jews. Do you know when a Jew thought

of a friend of God, do you know who he thought of? The brightest star in the Hebrew heaven – Abraham. Abraham was known as the “friend of God.” Nobody else was known as the friend of God. And now God in human flesh looks at these fishermen and He says, “You’re my friends.” A friend of Jesus, can it be? Oh, what an ennoblement that is, that we should be called His friends. And, you see, He had to take the initiative. You could never be a friend of Jesus unless He decided to be, first of all, your friend. Look in verse 16: “You’ve not chosen me; I chose you...”

*I found a friend, oh, such a friend;
He loved me e'er I knew Him.
He drew me with the chords of love,
and thus He bound me to Him.*

First thing – the ennoblement of friendship with Jesus. When He becomes my friend, it doesn’t lower Him, but, my friend, it certainly does elevate me. I am a friend of Jesus, not merely His servant. I am His servant, but, dear friend, I’m also His friend, and so are you.

II. The Enlargement of Friendship with Jesus

Second thing I want you to notice. Not only the ennoblement of it, but I want you to notice the enlargement of it. Now look, if you will, in verse 12: “This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.” Now, you see, there’s something about friendship with Jesus that enlarges us. You see, when you become my friend, then you must become a friend to my friends. That is, if you love me, you must love those that I love or you don’t truly love me. To say that you’re a friend of the Lord Jesus is to be a friend of all of His other friends. And in the context of friendship with Jesus, He says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another, that you be friends to one another, even as I have loved you, even as I am your friend.” What Jesus is saying is, ‘If you are My friend, My friends are your friends.’ Now put it down big and straight. “If you are My friend,” Jesus is saying, “then My friends are your friends.” And there is the enlarging circle of friendship. You know, one of the great delights that I’ve had in living the Christian life is this: That I will meet a friend.

One of my dearest friends is a man named Joe Boatright. I met Joe Boatright when I was in college. I was living in a trailer park. Joyce and I lived in a little house trailer. And, there was a young man came in, and he was pulling his house trailer into the trailer park there to set it up, and I went over to help him. I was sitting on the hood of an automobile talking with some people, and I saw the man, and I went over and met him. He put out a big ham-like hand and shook my hand and gave me a smile, and he said, “I am Joe Boatright.” I got to know this man named Joe Boatright. After we set up his trailer, I found out he had a heart for God. We went inside that little trailer and got down on our

knees and prayed. Just a couple of college boys. And, he is to me a brother. But I cannot tell you how many friends of Joe Boatright now have become my warm personal friends and how many of my friends have become his friends. There's just something about friendship - the ever-enlargement, the ever enlarging circles of friendship.

Now, friend, let me tell you something. One of the great, great privileges we have is being a friend of Jesus, because you know what that means? We're friends one of another. I just told Bob Sorrell, and I didn't tell him for a sermon illustration because, but I just looked at him just a few moments ago and I said, "Bob, I sure do love you." I had a man call me this morning before breakfast even. The phone rang. He said, "Pastor, I'm leaving town, but," he said, "I want you to know I just love you." Now that might sound corny to you, for one man to say to another man that he loves him. But, friend, do you know something? When we're friends of Jesus, we're so blessed because we have friends all over the world. The enlargement of friendship with the Lord Jesus. And if you don't love those that Jesus loves, there's something wrong with you.

Years ago I read of a pastor in Atlanta, Georgia. He was making a call. And he went into a particular family, into that home. It was a gorgeous home. They had everything, but they didn't have any children. A husband and a wife. And there was a little dog in that house. And the husband and the wife treated that little dog with such royalty. I mean, the dog seemed to have everything. They treated the dog almost as if the dog were a child, and they fawned over the dog and cuddled the dog and loved the dog in this gorgeous house, but a childless house. Just a dog. The pastor knew he was on thin ice, but he felt he, he ought to say something. He said, "Listen. May I be bold enough to ask you folks a question?" He said, "Now I may be way out of school, but you're such fine Christians. And God has blessed you financially so much. And you have such a love for the Word of God. I've noticed the love that you have for this dog. It just seems to me." He said, "I know I'm walking on thin ice, but it just seems to me that you ought to pray that God would give you a child so that you could pour some of the love that you're pouring into that dog into a baby." And when he said that, the chin started to quiver on that wife and big tears welled up in her eyes, and she bit her lip and turned and walked out of the room. He said, "I knew it. My big mouth. I shouldn't have said that." He asked the man, he said, "I'm sorry. What did I say?" He said, "Well, sir, you don't understand." He said, "We did have a child, the only child the doctor said that we could have, a son, and we loved him with all of our heart. But our son got an incurable illness and he died, and this dog that you're talking about - that was our son's dog. And on his deathbed he asked us to take care of his dog." He said, "Preacher, you don't understand, but do you know why we love that dog so much? And we do love him. It's easy to explain. We love him because our dear son loved him so much."

Now, friend, let me tell you something. If you have trouble loving the person next to

you, you just remember that God's dear Son loves that person very much, okay. God's dear Son loves him so much. We're to love one another because God so loved us. There's the enlargement of friendship.

III. The Enthronement of Friendship with Jesus

And then I want you to notice, thirdly, the enthronement of friendship with the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 13 and 14: "Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." When Jesus becomes our friend, He's not like any other friend. He must be enthroned not only as friend, but as King. "You are My friends if you do whatsoever I have commanded you." Friendship with Jesus is not cheap. As a matter of fact, all true friendship is costly. It cost to have friends. It cost to serve Jesus. It cost every day. There's no cheap friendship. We are not His friends because we obey Him, but we obey Him because we are His friends.

There are three reasons why you might serve anyone and obey anyone. Reason number one is because you are a slave and you have to. You don't have any other choice. Reason number two is you are an employee and you need to, because you've gotten the strange habit of eating and you don't want to quit. And so you just go to work and, like that bumper sticker I saw the other day – "Hi Ho, Hi Ho, It's Off to Work I Go." And if you owe, you're going to go to work. And, so you serve someone if you're a slave because you have to. If you're an employee, because you need to. But, my dear friend, if you are a friend, it's because you want to.

Now listen. I serve the Lord Jesus, but not in order to be saved and not in order to buy His friendship. His friendship is not for sale nor is His salvation. But Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." There's no ifs, ands, and buts about it. Verse 14: "You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you." 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. There is the enthronement of friendship with Jesus.

IV. The Enlightenment of Friendship with Jesus

Next, there is the enlightenment of friendship with Jesus. Look in verse 15. I love this part of it. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Now in this day there were men who had slaves, and the slaves did what the master told them. The master would tell them what, but he would never tell them why. He'd just say, "Go," and that man goes, and he says, "Come," and this one comes, but he never would say, "This is why you're doing what you are doing." Or at least he certainly was not obligated. It was necessary that the slave would know why.

The slave is told what, but the friend is told why.

Let me give you some verses to put in your margin here. John 17, verses 6 and 7. Jesus is praying to the Father and He says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world..." And the word manifested means "I have unlocked, I have made known Your name – the divine sacred secrets – I have made known them." "... thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept my word. Now they have known all, that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." That is, Jesus is saying, "These are My friends, Father. I have let them in on these sacred secrets."

Let me give you another one, Matthew chapter 13, verses 10 and 11. Jesus had been speaking in parables. "And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speaketh thou unto them in parables? And He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

Did you know, dear friends, that we are Jesus' confidantes? That He whispers sacred secrets into our ears? It is given unto us to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Friendship has its privileges. Jesus said in Luke 10, verses 23 and 24. The Bible says, "Blessed are..." Jesus said, "...blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see these things which you see, and have not seen them..." What is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying the simplest child of God can know things that Isaiah nor Solomon never dreamed of knowing – kings and prophets.

Friends, you can know things that philosophers and scientists cannot possible know. God gives you intimate knowledge because you're a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you don't have to have a seminary education. You don't have to have a Ph.D. You see, the Bible says, "God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes." That's such a great thing. That's so wonderful. Dear friend, Jesus says, "I am going to enlighten you because you are My friend."

I heard years ago a story of a college student who was a Christian and went to a secular university. And, in a particular class the professor had great fun ridiculing Christians. I mean, he hated Christians. He hates what we believe and what we stand for. And at the introduction of this class, maybe it was a class in philosophy—I don't know—he said, "I want to know if there is anyone in this class who believes the Bible to be the Word of God. Anyone in this enlightened age who is still foolish enough, superstitious enough, naïve enough, uneducated enough, so illiterate that he would still have the courage to stand and say I believe the Bible is the Word of God." Pretty heady stuff. Pretty intimidating in a college classroom. And many of those so-called Christians just kind of ducked their head. But there was one young man who just lifted his hand high. He said, "Yes, sir, I believe the Bible is the Word of God." Then the professor

knew that he had a victim. And he said, “Young man, would you stand, please.” And he said, “I want to ask you a question. Again, are you going to say to me in this 20th Century that you believe the Bible is the Word of God?” And then the professor began to low rate the Bible, to berate the Bible and the student at the same time, to ridicule him and to castigate him. And then the professor ended his criticism of the Bible by saying this: He said, “Sir, I have read the Bible many times and,” he said, “it makes absolutely no sense to me.” That student said, “Please, sir, I mean you no disrespect, but,” he said, “if you read the Bible and you don’t understand it, you need to remember this: That the Bible is God’s love letter to His children. And if you don’t understand it, it’s because you’ve been reading somebody else’s mail.” Amen.

Oh listen, friend. Jesus said, Jesus said, “You are My friends.” And He said, ‘I am going to reveal to you things that no one else knows.’ There is the enlightenment of true friendship.

V. The Enrichment of Friendship with Jesus

And then there is the enrichment of friendship with Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 16: “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...” Do you know what a friend is? A friend is a person who makes you fruitful. A friend is a person who enriches your life. Jesus is saying, “As you abide in My friendship, and My life abides in you, then you’re going to be a very fruitful person.” The Bible says in Proverbs 27 and verse 17: “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Let me give you one of the tests of true friendship. A real friend is somebody who makes you a better person. As iron sharpens iron, real friendship will put the edge on your life. It will not blunt your influence or your life, but it will sharpen it.

Do you know who my best friend is, human friend? She’s sitting up in the choir this morning. Her name is Joyce. She’s my best friend. She’s my wife, but she’s also my friend, my best friend on this earth. And, incidentally, today, September 2, we have been married for thirty-nine years. Isn’t that something? Now thirty-nine years ago I said “Wilt thou,” and she wilted. Now listen, listen. Do you know one of the sweet things about Joyce, and there’s so many sweet things about her? But one of the things that I love, and I can say this without fear of contradiction. She has enriched my life. You see, she has made me fruitful through her prayers and through her influence and all of these things. A friend, a real friend, will do that.

Someone wrote these words: I think they’re beautiful.

*I love you, not for what you are, but what I am when I am with you.
I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,
but for what you are making of me.*

*I love you for not closing your ears to the discords in me,
but for adding to the music in me by worshipful listening.
You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign.
You have done it by just being yourself.*

Perhaps this is what being a friend means after all. Oh, my dear friend, the enrichment of friendship with Jesus. Jesus is saying, “You’re My friends.” And then He says in verse 16, “You didn’t choose me; I chose you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”

VI. The Entitlement of Friendship with Jesus

Now, next, sixthly, there is the entitlement of friendship with Jesus. Do you know we’re entitled to do something when we become His friends? Look, if you will, in verse 16 again. He said, “...that your fruit should remain, and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He may give it you.” Friendship has its privileges, my friend. Friendship has its privileges. Now not only, dear friend, when you are a friend to someone else, then you know what that friend has is made available to you. In the Bible, when the Bible uses the word friend, the Bible doesn’t use the word lightly as we use the word lightly. You know, sometimes we might write a stranger, and we say, “Dear Friend.” But the Bible would never use the word that lightly.

The word friend in the Bible is a blood covenant word. In the Old Testament, people would enter into a blood covenant. Sometimes they would sacrifice an animal when they entered into a blood covenant. Sometimes they would cut their wrists and mingle their blood. And people who entered into a blood covenant entered into a relationship closer than physical brothers. Have you ever read the Scripture that says, “There’s a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”? It’s talking about people in blood covenant that is closer than a brother. And when people entered into a blood covenant, it simply meant that all that I have is yours and all that you have is mine.

David and Jonathan entered into a blood covenant. And when David and Jonathan in the Old Testament went into a blood covenant, Jonathan took off his coat and put it on David and took his armor and gave it to David. And what Jonathan was saying to David was, “My possessions are your possessions.” Now Jonathan was a prince and David was not. But Jonathan said, “My possessions are your possessions.” And when, when Jonathan gave to David his weapons, he’s saying, “David, your enemies are my enemies and your friends are my friends.” What there was is just that exchange of personhood by the mingling of blood, a provision by the exchange of garments, protection by the exchange of weapons. And when people had entered into a blood covenant, they were called friends. And if you needed anything that your friend had, in your friend’s name you could get it. Now Jesus said, “You’re My friend. And now, if you

ask anything in My name, the Father will give it you.”

Oh, my dear one, what a privilege to be a friend of Jesus. What an entitlement we have that we can now pray in the name of Jesus. That doesn't mean just to tack a little phrase on the end of a prayer, to rattle off a shopping list and say, “In Jesus' name.” Oh no, dear friend. Now He's been whispering into our ears sacred secrets. We know His will. He makes known to us the things of the Father. And we know what the Father wants. And, therefore, in the name of Jesus we can pray and expect to get our prayers answered.

VII. The Entanglement of Friendship with Jesus

Well, there's one last thing I want to mention. Not only is there the entitlement of friendship with Jesus, but the seventh blessing that jumped out at me as I studied this passage is what I want to call—you may be surprised at this one—the entanglement, the entanglement of friendship with Jesus. You know, when you get to be a friend of Jesus, your life gets all entangled. I mean, you get into a web of circumstances.

Let me show you what I'm talking about here, beginning in verse 17: “These things I command you, that you love one another.” Now when you're a friend of Jesus, I want to remind you again that you are a friend to those that Jesus is a friend of. When you're a friend of Jesus, your life is wrapped up in my life and my life is wrapped up in your life. And when we're a member of His church, we can't say, “It's nobody else's business what I do.” To be a friend of Jesus is to be a friend of Jesus' friends, okay. Now look at it again. Your life is inextricably interwoven, intertwined with my life, and mine with yours because we share a common friendship with the Lord Jesus.

C. S. Lewis said something I think is very penetrating at this point, and I want you to listen to these words. I'm going to read them slowly because I want you to think about it. There are some of you who don't want to get entangled. I mean, there are some people who don't want to go down to church because they think they might get involved in something. You know, the thing today is to—what?—to cocoon. That is, shut everybody out, put on the headphones, get your temperature on your thermostat set just right, and just kind of live inward. Here's what C. S. Lewis said, and I want you to listen to it. He said, and I'm going to read it slowly, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. To love any, love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping your heart intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully with hobbies and little luxuries. Avoid all entanglements. Lock it safe in a casket of your own selfishness. There it will not be broken. It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” So you just take your little old heart and you just say, “I'm not going to get involved with anyone.” Your heart will become hard as stone.

Conclusion

My dear friend, there is the entanglement of friendship with Jesus. His friends become your friends. Now wait a minute. Listen, I'm not finished yet. His enemies will become your enemies. When you become a friend of Jesus, not only do you have His friendship, but you're going to have the hatred of other people. Look at it, verse 18: "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you." Did you know that I have picked up some enemies just because of the friends that I have? I mean, in this world. As a matter of fact, if you're a friend of mine, there are going to be some people who don't like you. You mention my name, better duck or pucker because they'll want to kiss you or take a swing at you. And, and that's true about anybody who takes a stand for the Lord Jesus. And when you're a friend of Jesus, not only must you be a friend to His friends, but, dear friend, His enemies are going to be your enemies just because you're His friend.

You listen to me if you don't hear anything else that I have to say. If you don't have any enemies, Jesus is not your friend. If you don't have any enemies, there's one friend I know you do not have. His name is Jesus. If you think that you're going to be a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ and get out unbent, unbloodied, oh no. Unscarred, oh no. Jesus says, "Yes, you can come in. You can be My intimate. You can be My friend."

But remember there's the entanglement of friendship with Jesus. Verse 17: "These things I command you, that you love one another. And if the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Josh Billings said this: "The man who ain't got an enemy is really poor. The man who ain't got an enemy is really poor." I hope you're not that poor. A man is known by his friends and he's known by his enemies.

*I've found a friend; oh, such a friend.
He loved me e'er I knew Him.
He drew me with the chords of love,
and thus He bound me to Him.
And round my heart still closely twine
those ties which naught can sever,
for I am His (hallelujah) and He is mine.
Praise His name forever and forever.
I've found a friend, oh, such a friend;
He bled, He died to save me.
And not alone the gift of life,*

*but His own self He gave me.
Naught that I have my own I call,
I hold it for the giver.
My heart, my strength, my life, my all
are His and His forever.*

I am my beloved and He is mine. Go back, dear friend, to that day so long ago when Joyce and I knew that we'd lost our little baby boy. I don't know about you, but, friend, I couldn't make it without Jesus. I don't know what people do who don't know Jesus. Where do they turn? What do they do unless they can sing it and say it and mean it, what a friend we have in Jesus?

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Dear friend, Jesus wants to be your friend. He wants to come into your heart and save you once and for all, now and forever. And He has chosen you. You don't have to go, saying, "Lord Jesus, would You please be my friend." He wants to be your friend. He has chosen you, but you must respond to Him today. And if you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: "Lord Jesus." Just pray to Him. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Just pray to Him today. "Lord Jesus, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. And You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, right now this moment with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus." Would you ask Him? Just pray it from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Lord, I pray that many in this building today will pray that prayer. In Your wonderful name, amen.

Prayer: How to Get on Praying Ground

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 16, 1994

Main Scripture Text: John 15:16

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

JOHN 15:16

Outline

Introduction

I. A Life in Communion with the Lord

II. A Life Controlled by the Lord

III. A Life Cleansed by the Lord

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to John chapter 15. And if you have been a Christian very long and have studied the Bible very much, you know that John 15 is one of the richest devotional passages in all of the Word of God. I want to talk to you tonight about prayer and how to get on praying ground. I want you to look, please, in John chapter 15 and verse 16.

Jesus said, “You’ve not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” It’s one of the great promises and also one of the great instructions in the life of prayer.

Now there are two things that determine the answer to prayer. There are two things that must be right before you get your prayer answered. Number one: You must pray for the right thing. I mean, you must ask God for something according to His will. “This is the confidence that we have in him; if we ask him anything according to his will, he hears us.” It would be absurd to think that God would answer prayer for something that’s not according to His will. Prayer, as we’ve often said, is not bending God’s will to fit our will; prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. So, first of all, there must be the content of the prayer.

But there's something else that is necessary. You can pray for the right thing and still not get your prayer answered. There's something else that is vitally necessary if you're going to get your prayer answered, and that is the character of the one doing the praying. Both content and character are necessary if you're going to get your prayer answered. So, ah, the person praying must not only be praying according to the will of God, but he himself must be living in the will of God. Now of those two things, which is the most important – the content of the prayer or the character of the one who's doing the praying? The second is more important than the first. Why? Because if you have the right character, if you're living according, if you're living in the will of God, then God can teach you His will. And, therefore, you can pray in the will of God. But if you're not living in the will of God, if your character is not right, if you're not attuned to God, there, there's no way that, ah, God can teach you His will.

Now the most important thing is not that you know how to pray. The most important thing is that you are qualified to pray. Because if you're qualified to pray, before long you will be learning how to pray.

I heard one time of a basketball coach who was driving through the countryside. And he saw a farm boy who was 7 feet tall. He said, "Son, I want to give you a scholarship to college. I want you to play basketball." He said, "Sir, I don't know how to play basketball." He said, "That's all right." Said, "We can teach you how to play basketball. We can't teach you how to be 7 feet tall." And, ah, it, God can teach us to pray if we are 7 feet tall spiritually. I mean, if, if we are what we ought to be, then God can teach us the will of God.

Now it's really your life that prays, and your prayer life is not greater than your personal life. And I don't mind telling you that the Scripture that I'm sharing with you tonight has greatly challenged my life. As a matter of fact, it's caused me to do some repenting. It's caused me to do some soul searching. I want my life to be the kind of a life that God can be pleased to say, "I will teach him My will, and I will answer his prayer." You can pray for the right thing and not get your prayer answered. And you certainly won't know the right thing, even if you did pray for it if you're not in the will of God and living in the will of God.

When Israel had, ah, won the battle at Jericho, then right down the road from Jericho there was a small, insignificant, ignominious little town called Ai. It's two letters in the name of the town, just A and I. Some people pronounce it I. I pronounce it Ai. You can pronounce it however you want. Just two letters in the, in the name of that little town. And, ah, the Israeli went against that little town after they'd conquered mighty Jericho and they were defeated. They were shamed. They were routed. They were disgraced. And Joshua got down on his face to pray and ask God, "Why, God, let it happen?" He tried to blame God. And God said to Joshua, "Joshua, get up off your face. Israel has

sinned.” Now what He was saying is this: “Joshua, prayer is not the most important thing right now. Quit praying and get right with Me.” Prayer is not some sort of a smoke screen that we can hide our sin in. The Bible clearly and plainly tells us, “If we regard iniquity in our heart, the LORD will not hear us.”

Now it's the life that prays. You can preach without being right with God. I'm afraid I've done some of that. You can teach without being right with God. You can witness without being right with God. You know why? All of that is man to man. You don't know my heart right now. You're looking at me, and you're saying, “I hope he's right. Hope he's a good guy. I believe he is.” I hope you believe I am. By the way, I, ah, I think I am (laughter). But you don't know for certain.

You can have a teacher who might have a gift of knowledge and a gift of gab. He might teach good stuff. You can go out and witness and not have your heart right with God. Paul said, “Some preach Christ of contention, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. “ He said, “Nevertheless, I rejoice. Christ is preached.” You can preach, you can sing, you can teach, you can witness and not be right with God. I'm not saying that you ought to, but I'm saying you can do it. But you can't prayer and not be right with God. Do you know why? You see, these other things are man to man, and we can fool one another. But prayer is man to God, and you can't fool God. That's the reason, very frankly, that some of us don't pray. You know, ah, we know we can't fool God. And so we may keep on doing these, ah, these other things, but when we come to pray, we, we don't want to pray because we feel like, ah, God knows us and we really don't want to look God in the face. When you backslide, the first thing that will go is your prayer life. You tell me about your prayer life and I'll tell you about your relationship to God. When you backslide, the first thing that goes is not necessarily your soul winning, not your teaching, not your preaching, not your singing, not your church work, not your committee work, not your deaconship. It's your prayer life. Because your prayer life has to be right before you can pray. The flesh doesn't want to pray, and the flesh will not pray. Oh, you may give a little few mumbles, but I'm talking about your prayer life. You tell me what kind of a prayer life you have and I'll tell you how spiritual you are. Amen or oh, me? What you are in private before God is what you are, nothing else. What you are in the closet or in your place of prayer is what you are. And the reason that some of us don't pray is because we're not much. We talk a good game, but, you see, prayer is God to man and man to God. And you can't fake that very long. Oh, you can get forced into a prayer meeting and give your little memorized prayers. We all have prayers. Anybody can rattle off a pray, a prayer. But I'm talking about that communion with God. The most important part of your prayer life is your heart condition. “...the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me.”

Now I'm going to get to our text in just a moment. But even before I do, 1 John chapter 3 and verse 22. Listen to it. Here's what the apostle John says, who also wrote this gospel of John by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight." Now if you're not keeping His commandments and not pleasing Him, don't expect to get your prayer answered. Answered prayer is not for rebels. The content of the prayer and the character of the prayer are both necessary in order to, the, the character of the prayer are both necessary in order to get the prayer answered.

Now go back in John, ah, 15 and let's begin in verse 1, and let me just read beginning in verse 1. Then I want to give you three principles now of, of getting your life right so you can pray.

John 15, verse 1. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." Not that's vine dresser. He's the one who takes care of the vineyard. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it..." That means he prunes it. "...that may, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine and ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them in to the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

I. A Life in Communion with the Lord

Now, number one, and I'm not going to try to be cute or clever. I'm going to give it to you just plain straight. You've got to abide in Christ to get your prayers answered. Look. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Now we are to be to Jesus Christ what a branch is to a grapevine. And it's just that simple. Now the branch has to accept the vine's purpose for its life and for its existence. Go back to verse 4. Look at it. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." What is the purpose of a branch? It is to bear fruit. That is the purpose of a branch in a grape vine. It is to bear fruit. Now if you're not bearing fruit, you're a worthless branch. If somebody brings you a basket of fruit and in that basket of fruit are some bananas and apples and oranges and then some grape branches, and that's it, that would be foolish. I mean, what are you going to do? Chew on those branches? The branches are just something, ah, they're just a, a grape rack. They're there to bear fruit. Look again in verse 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained

you, that you should go and bring forth fruit..." Now if you want your prayer answered, you're going to have to abide in Christ so that He can use your life as His instrument to produce His fruit.

Have you ever prayed and asked God to heal you, and He did? Well, thank God for it. But suppose you pray and ask God to heal you and He doesn't do it. Well, there are a number of reasons for that. But one reason might be this: That God might say, "Why should I increase your strength to give you more strength to serve the devil?" I mean, why, why should the vine pour life into the branch if the branch is not producing any fruit? That kind of a branch needs to be excised. It needs to be cut out. Why should the Lord bless you? What is the purpose of prayer? Look. It, it is that, that God would be glorified by your bringing forth much fruit. This is what he says that, that it is, it is how the Father is glorified when we bear much fruit.

Now is your life a life that glorifies God? If your life is not a life that glorifies God, why should God answer your prayer? You see, I am fruitful. You're fruitful when we abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not more branches that we need. It's healthier branches, branches that are abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ. The, the branch doesn't produce the fruit. All the branch does is to bear the fruit. The fruit is not the branch's responsibility. It is the vine's responsibility. The branch's responsibility is to abide in the vine.

I want to ask you a question. Would it be right for you to pray that God would bless this church financially if your money is not at His disposal? Would it be right for you to ask God to heal your body if your body is not totally, 100% surrendered to Him to do His will? Would it be right for you to pray for your lost neighbor if you're not willing to be the instrument that God would use to win that lost neighbor to Jesus Christ? Would it be right for you to pray for somebody who needs help, a hand of mercy and compassion, and you're not willing, ah, to be the instrument of that mercy and compassion? Well, let me put it another way. Would it be right for a branch to, to pray to the vine and say, "May there be a lot of grapes," and yet, at the same time, not be willing to be the instrument to bear those grapes? Hmmm. You see, if we're not abiding in the vine, if we're not available to the vine for the purpose of the vine, why should our Lord pour His strength into us? Look again in verse 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Statement – big one. Listen to it. Don't pray for anything that you're not willing for Him to do through you. I'm not saying He will do it through you always. It may be that He cannot. You might be praying for someone overseas and you can't get over there. But don't pray for anything that you're not willing for Him to do through you. That's just religious babble. All right. Now listen.

The proof that you're abiding is fruitfulness. I mean, if you're unfruitful, don't tell me that you are abiding. What is fruit, anyway? Fruit is an outward expression of an inward

nature. Ah, you can look at trees. You can't tell whether one tree is a pear tree or an apple tree or some other kind of tree, or cherry. I mean, maybe you can. I can't. They all look alike to me. But I can tell when the fruit gets out there. I mean, by the fruit you know the tree. By their fruits you know them.

Now the inward nature of a true Christian who's abiding in Christ, when you're abiding in Christ, the nature of Jesus is going to be in you, just like when a branch is abiding in a vine and the nature of that vine is in that branch. I mean, the very life of Jesus is in you if you're abiding in Christ. The fruit that he's talking about is not, ah, building a big church or winning so many people to Jesus. The fruit that he's talking about is Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..." That's just a biography of Jesus. The life of Jesus Christ is going to be being produced in me. You say, "Well, I thought we ought to be soul winners. I think that ought to be the fruit." No. Here's the fruit: The fruit of the Spirit, friend, is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The seed is in the fruit.

You say, "Well, I thought we ought to be soul winners. I think that ought to be the fruit." No. Here's the fruit: The fruit of the Spirit, friend, is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The seed is in the fruit. It's the seed that reproduces, but it's the fruit that causes the seed to be scattered. And what we need to do – it's, it's, it's the fruit that makes the seed desirable. It's the life of the Lord Jesus Christ that's going to be in us when we abide. And, and, and listen, friend. When we get in union with Christ, and Christ, His life, comes out of us, and when you've been around a person who's abiding, you have been around Jesus. You say, "Hey, that's, that's an overstatement." No, it's not an overstatement. Friend, I am in Him, and He is in me. We are His body. We are a part of Him as much as a branch is a part of a vine. His life is in us. He inhabits our humanity. "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that lives in me..." You know what's the matter? People have come in contact with churches and denominations and programs. They need to come in contact with Jesus Christ. I mean, they need to meet Jesus Christ. The life of God needs to come out of us. And when the life of God comes out of us, we're going to bring forth fruit, and that fruit will remain. Look, again, in verse 16: "You've not chosen me, but I've chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit..." Now if you don't go and bring forth fruit, you're not abiding. You have refused the One who has chosen and ordained you. "...and that your fruit should remain..." The kind of fruit I'm talking about is not a building like this. This is the fruit of my ministry, heaven help me, because this is premature rubble. Just give it time. The gnawing tooth of time and the foul breath of decay will take care of this building and anything else. Anything men build, men can destroy. And if men doesn't, time will. Men don't, time will. But what you do in the power

of the Holy Spirit will never, never, never, never be destroyed. That fruit will remain. It's permanent. Everything else will be wood, hay, and stubble at the judgment seat of Christ.

Every now and then we have some evangelist who'll blow through town. He's got about nine memorized sermons. They're red hot, plenty of good stories, and I'm not against that. But he says, "Oh man, we had a great meeting. We had five hundred decisions." Well, if you want to know whether it was a great meeting or not, come back a year later and see if you've got five hundred disciples. Not decision, disciples! Not sound and fury, fruit! Fruit that remains.

Anything that Jesus does remains. The branch does not produce the fruit. The vine produces the fruit. The branch bears the fruit.

Now if you want to get your prayer answered, you have to abide. I mean, hey, I didn't say that. Look in verse 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." When you begin to let the life of Jesus Christ flow through you, when you are available for the purposes of Christ, when you are surrendered to Christ, as a branch is to a vine, then, my dear friend, you're getting your life lined up so your prayer will be answered.

II. A Life Controlled by the Lord

But now, wait a minute. He gives another qualification in verse 7. And both of these deal with the character of the one praying. "If ye abide in me, and (listen) my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Now there's a life in communion with the Lord. That's abiding in Him. And there's a life controlled by the Lord. That's His word abiding in us. And both of those things build a character, and that is, the character is the life that prays.

Now what does it mean for His word to abide in you? Well, the word *abide* means to dwell with, to be permanently at home. When God's Word comes in not as a overnight guest, but comes in to take up residence in us, at that moment the Word of God begins to abide in us. Now when that happens, three things, the Word of God abiding in you, this will happen.

First of all, the Word of God will control you. I mean, the Word of God will say, "Do this and don't do that." They're called commandments. Have you ever noticed that? Not suggestions, commandments. Question: Is there anything that God has told you to do in His Word that you're not doing? Well, then why do you expect to get your prayer answered? "If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, you shall ask what you will..."

III. A Life Cleansed by the Lord

Now the Word of God is going to control you. You're controlled by the Word of God. Now not only will it control you. I'll tell you what else it will do. It will cleanse you. Look in verse 2, chapter 15 and verse 2: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it..." That means He prunes it. "...that it may bring forth more fruit." Now how, how does He, how does He, how does He do that? I mean, what is the instrument? How does He purge you? What, what does He do? Well, keep reading. Verse 3: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Word of God is the pruning, the clippers, the shears. That's it, the Word of God. It is the Word that controls you. It is the Word that cleanses you. He cleanses us with His, the shears of God's Word.

You ever get clipped? Well, you're not in the Word much if you don't. And you know what God will clip away from us? Well, you say, "The sin." Well, yes, but that's not all. He cuts out the dead wood, the unproductive leaves, the foliage that's sapping life. Amusements, television, hobbies, extraneous spending, reading, friendships. You say, "What's wrong with these?" What's wrong with leaves? What's wrong with branches? Nothing, except if they're not bearing fruit, what good are they? What good are they? I mean, it's not that these are producing poison fruit. They're just sapping up stuff. And, you know, one of these days we're going to come to the judgment seat of Christ and say, "Why didn't I let my life count more for Jesus? Why did I spend so much time on stuff that is not important?" Just leaves and branches. Well, you say, "It's, it's, well, it's not my fault. It was there. I mean, I, I can't help it." Had you been in the Word and the Word of God was abiding in you, those pruning shears would have done their work in you. Now seemingly good things sometimes have to go. Beautiful branches and beautiful leaves have to go. You're clean through the Word.

You know, you don't have to prune yourself. Right now, when I was talking about, you know, I listed all those things, your mind saying, "Oh, no, not that. Not that. Yeah, this, but not that." You don't know. You don't know. You can't prune yourself. If you tried, you'd, you'd go easy in some areas you ought to go hard on, and go hard in some areas that you'll go easy on. You might end up a fanatic. Get in the Word of God. The Word of God will cleanse you. It will control you. And it will communicate to you.

Look, if you will, in verse 7. Look at it again. John 15 and verse 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what (what?) ye will..." Huh, I thought it was His will. That's right. "...what ye will..." Well, I thought it was His will. That's right. "...what ye will..." Listen. When you begin to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the life of that, ah, vine begins to flow into you, and you get into the Word of God, and the Word of God begins to control you and cleanse you, **it will communicate to you**. And what you will and what God wills are the same will. And then you get the content of the prayer

right. But, remember, it is the character that helps you to get the content. You see, the trouble with your prayer life just may be you.

Conclusion

I want people to be able to feast on the fruit of my life, and I believe you want people to be able to feast. I want my children, I want the members of this church to eat of the fruit of a life that abides in Christ. And I want to tell you something, folks. I have been challenged by this Scripture tonight. I'm not standing up here as a person who says, "I've got it all figured out." I probably am in, probably need this more than anybody else, because maybe, in some ways, I know some more things than some people know. "And to whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required." But if you think about it, is there really anything so valuable that it's worth not having our prayers answered?

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Would you pray tonight, "Lord, help me to get on praying ground. Lord, teach me to abide in You, to abide in You, to be surrendered to You for Your purpose." A branch has no sidelines. It exists for one thing, and that is the vine and the vine alone. A branch that is not abiding in the vine is fit for one thing, and that is to be burned. You can't even make good furniture out of a branch, a grape branch. You can't even build a good fire with it. It makes a fire, but it doesn't keep one going. It's just good to be burned up. "Lord, help me to abide in You. And, Lord, let Your Word abide in me. May Your Word control me. May it cleanse me. May it communicate to me." Now it's not going to do that if you don't find time to read it. And if you read it and don't obey it, you're in grand self-delusion. That's what James said. And if you're a hearer of the word and not a doer, you're deceiving yourself. "Lord, help me to abide in You. I choose You, Lord. Lord, let Your Word abide in me, and do what pruning is necessary. Thank You, Lord, for Your Word tonight. In Jesus' name, amen."s

Are You Offended at God?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 26, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 16:1–7

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.”

JOHN 16:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. Do Not Get Offended When You Are Persecuted for Doing Right
- II. Do Not Get Offended When You Are Exposed for Doing Wrong
- III. Do Not Get Offended When Your Expectations Are Not Met
 - A. Some Followed the Lord for Political Motives
 - B. Some Followed the Lord for Material Motives
 - C. Jesus Spoke About Spiritual Motives
- IV. Do Not Get Offended When God Blesses Someone Else More Than You

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you be finding John chapter 16? When you've found it, look up here just a moment—John chapter 16. May I ask you a question? And, I want you to think deeply about it. Have you ever been offended at God? Have you ever been resentful at the way that God is running the universe? Have you ever said, “I don't like the way that God did this or God did that”? Now, it's not that you don't believe in God. It might even be easier for you, you feel, if you did not believe in God. Everything in you knows that God exists, and down in your heart, you love Him. You have trusted Him. You have committed your life to Him. And yet, if you were real, real honest, you are offended at some of the things that God has done.

Now, our Lord knew that there is a danger of that. Read here in John chapter 16, verse 1: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things*

[to] you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:1–7) Again, Jesus said, "I am telling you something now, and I am telling you ahead of time: it's not going to be an easy road. I'm telling you that if you follow me, there's going to come some heartache, some trouble, and I don't want there to be any fine print in the contract. I want you to know ahead of time that you are not to be offended at the things that happen."

I've been a pastor long enough to know that one of the great problems in the Church is this: that people come forward in services like this one to give their hearts to Jesus—and well they ought, and I hope today that many of you will do that thing: that you will say, "Here, Lord Jesus. Here's my heart. Here's my life. I give it to you. I put myself under your care and into your trust. Take care of me, Lord"—and you do that and you mean well; but then, you have the idea that "since I've given my heart to Christ, certain things are not going to happen to me any more. I'm not going to have any trouble. I'm not going to have any difficulty." And then, persecution arises or heartache arises. Disappointment arises. Confusion and consternation arise. And, you say, "I wonder about all of this. Why—why—did God let this happen to me?" And then, you fall away. I've seen it many times. You don't come to church any more. You leave off your Sunday school class. You cease to bring your offering to God, and you just become a spiritual dropout because you have a grudge with God. You have a disappointment with Deity. You are offended at the Almighty.

Now, I'm going to give you a number of scriptures today, and we're going to go to a lot of different places today in the Word of God, so you might want to keep your Bible in your lap and be ready to turn to these passages. But, this idea of being offended at God is going to increase in the last days, and the Bible clearly tells us about it.

You might want to turn to Matthew chapter 24, and our Lord, there, is talking about the persecution that's going to come to the Church in the last days—and folks, it's going to come. I want to tell you—no *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts*, stutter or stammer about it—if you live out-and-out for Jesus Christ in these last days, this world is going to come down on you like a hammer. If you're not careful, you're going to get offended when it happens. Matthew 24, verses 9 and 10: Jesus said, "*Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you*"—did you think that, if you gave your heart to Christ, that perhaps you would be protected from persecution? Not according to Jesus—"*and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake*"—did you think that the world is going to honor you if you give your heart to Jesus? Oh, no—"*And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*" (Matthew 24:9–10) "*Many [will] be offended.*" (Matthew 24:10) Why in the last days? Because of this kind of persecution.

Now again, I want to give you four ways or four reasons or four situations that may

cause you to get offended in the last days. Now, I want you to listen very carefully because if you don't listen, you're liable to go around pouting at God, disappointed in Deity, offended at the Almighty.

I. Do Not Get Offended When You Are Persecuted for Doing Right

Number one: Don't get offended when you are persecuted for doing right—when you are persecuted for doing right. Now, you're in Matthew. Look in Matthew chapter 13, if you will for a moment, and look, if you will, beginning in verse 20. This is the parable of the seed. And, our Lord told about a sower who went forth to sow, and he sowed his seed on various kinds of soil. And then, he mentions one particular type of soil in verse 20: *“But he that [receiveth] the seed into stony places, [is] the same [as] he that heareth the word, and anon with joy [he] receiveth it”*—he comes to a church service like this. He hears the preaching that Jesus Christ died for his sin, that he can receive Christ, life everlasting, the fullness of the Spirit, all of this, and he says, “Hallelujah! This is what I have been looking for.” But now, look in verse 21—*“Yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth”*—that is, “he endures for a while”—*“for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”* (Matthew 13:20–21) Now, he starts wonderfully well. He has great joy. He's doing fine until he gets a bloody nose, until he stubs his toe, until he slips and falls, until somebody jumps on him for his faith. And, he suffers not for doing wrong, but he suffers for doing right.

Let me illustrate this to you again. Look in Matthew chapter 11, if you will—Matthew chapter 11. This is the story of a man named John the Baptist. I love John the Baptist. When I think of John, I think of two things: what a man, and what a message—John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 11—chapter 11, verse 1: *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in...prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go...shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, [and] the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached [unto] them”*—now, look in verse 6—*“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For [behold] this is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto [thee], Among*

them that are born of [woman] there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”
(Matthew 11:1–11)

Now, I'm going to stop reading right there. Here's John the Baptist—John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ; John the Baptist, that Jesus said was a prophet and more than a prophet. Jesus said, “There was not a greater man born of woman than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11) Now, I didn't say that; Jesus said that, and that's a pretty good recommendation. But now, John the Baptist, you remember, had been preaching out by the River Jordan. He had a brook for a choir, a stone for a pulpit. He ate locusts and wild honey. He didn't preach honey, though. He put his finger in the face of those Pharisees and said, “You bunch of rattlesnakes. How are you going to escape the judgment that is going to come?” Great crowds went out to hear him. He was baptizing the multitudes. What a man of God was he! When Jesus Christ came, he pointed a finger and said, “*Behold the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29) What a ministry He had!

But now, he's taken by Herod, and he's put in prison in Machaerus. That's over on the other side of the Dead Sea. I've been there to cast my eyes across the Dead Sea, and I've wondered many times about old John in prison over there. You could not find a more desolate place—about thirteen hundred feet below sea level. The heat is like a lead coat. And, there he is, down there in prison rotting away, and he hears about Jesus preaching and teaching and healing. Now, John had preached a Christ of judgment, “*whose [winnowing] fan [was] in his hand...[who would] burn...the chaff with unquenchable fire.*” (Matthew 3:12) He had preached a mighty Christ. He had served that Christ. And now, he is persecuted.

Now, he's in prison, and he hears Jesus just going about doing good. Where is the mighty Christ that he preached about? Where is this Christ of judgment? John has some doubts, and he gets some of his disciples and he said, “Would you go ask that man—would you go ask Him if He is really the Messiah or should we look for somebody else?” That's hard to believe that's John, isn't it? But, he said, “Go ask Him if He is really the Messiah or should we look for somebody else?” Jesus said, “You go tell John this. Go tell John that blind eyes are seeing. Go tell John that lame feet are following me. Go tell John that the spiritual dead are receiving life again. Go tell John that the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And, tell John this: tell John, ‘Blessed is the man who's not offended at me.’” Do you know what He was saying to John? “John, let me be God. Let me do it my way. And John, don't get all bent out of shape if it doesn't work out the way you think it ought to work out. When you've been doing good, when you've been preaching, you've been pointing to me. And, there you are in prison, John. Don't get offended at me.”

I tell you what John did, and I want to recommend this to you if you're having trouble,

if you're being persecuted for doing right, if this world is mistreating you because you stood up for Christ and the gospel and you thought that you ought to be honored, and rather than being honored, you've been dishonored. If you're having some sincere doubts and if you're tempted to be offended at the Lord, let me suggest that you do what John did. If you've got some doubts, bring your doubts to Jesus. Now, John had an honest question, and he brought that question to Jesus. And, Jesus gave to John an honest answer. Did you know that there were some people who tried to trick Jesus? They would ask Jesus dishonest questions. They were trying to trap Him. But, every time they asked Him a dishonest question, He never gave them a straight answer; He answered the question with another question. But, when anybody ever came to Jesus with an honest doubt, Jesus gave them an honest answer. Bring your doubts to Jesus, and Jesus will answer—just come to Him with an honest question. Jesus will give you an honest answer. And, Jesus did not mistake the moment for the man. Jesus knew that John was having doubts. Jesus could understand. There was old John down there in that prison. “I can understand that John, but John, I’m doing it just according to my schedule. And John, don’t get offended at the way that I’m doing things.” And, I want to say that to some of you today: let God be God. Everything is on schedule, and our Lord knows exactly, precisely what He is doing.

Now, let me tell you what real faith is: real faith is not just receiving from God the things you want; real faith is accepting from God the things He gives. That’s what real faith is.

II. Do Not Get Offended When You Are Exposed for Doing Wrong

Now, let me tell you another way that people can get offended at God. Sometimes people get offended at God when they suffer for doing right. Here’s another way people get offended with God: they get offended at God when they’re exposed for doing wrong. I’ve seen the same thing happen in churches today: people get exposed for doing wrong.

Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 15 for just a moment and verse 8—Matthew chapter 15 and verse 8. Jesus is preaching. Well, let’s start in verse 7. Jesus is preaching, and He doesn’t exactly seem to be seeker-sensitive here. He says, “[*You hypocrites, well did [Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain...do [they] worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh [up] out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*]” (Matthew 15:7–12) “Didn’t you know, Lord,

that you offended people with your preaching?”

Now, I've been preaching for a long time, and I have known many times that people have gotten offended at what I've said. And, I don't necessarily get upset because people get offended. I would expect it. They told Billy Sunday—said, “Billy, you're rubbing the fur on the cat the wrong way.” He said, “Well, the old cat's headed toward hell. If she'd turn around, I'd be rubbing it the right way.” There are people who get offended when they hear the truth and especially when their hypocrisy is pulled back and unmasked. And, what our Lord Jesus Christ did was to say to these people, “You are religious, but you're lost. You worship me in vain. You have a hypocritical type of religion.” And, they were offended; they were angry at the Lord—and so it is today. Sometimes people get offended because they are persecuted for doing right. Sometimes people get offended because they're exposed for doing wrong.

I may have told you about an evangelist friend of mine that I love very much whose name is Eddie Martin. But, Eddie Martin was preaching in a revival one time, and he gave an invitation. And, a lady came forward down the aisle. She was well attired and beautifully made up. Her face was just-so. And, he said, “Madam, why did you come forward?” “Well,” she said, “Mr. Martin, I would like to join the church.” “Well,” he said, “that's fine, but,” he said, “you need to be saved.” “Well,” she said, “all right, Mr. Martin. I would like to be saved.” He said, “Well, wonderful.” He said, “Would you pray this prayer after me: ‘Dear God...’” She said, “Dear God...” “I need to be saved...” She said, “I need to be saved...” “I confess that I'm a sinner...” She didn't say anything. He thought she didn't hear so he started again: “Dear God...” “Dear God...” “I need to be saved...” “I need to be saved...” “I confess that I'm a sinner...” She didn't say anything. He said, “Lady, repeat after me: ‘I confess that I'm a sinner.’” She said, “Mr. Martin, I'm not a sinner.” “Well,” he said, “lady, the Bible says that *‘all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’*” (Romans 3:23) “Well,” she said, “if I'm a sinner, I'm a good sinner.” He said to her, “Lady, there are no good sinners. You're not ready to be saved. Go back to your seat.” She was offended. She drew herself up, offended, and she turned around and started back to her seat. But, she only got so far until the Spirit of God hit her, and the mascara started to flow. She came back and said, “Mr. Martin, I am a no-good sinner.” He said, “Now you're ready to be saved,” and she was saved.

There are some of you today who will never come to the place that that lady came to and you'll never be saved. You're like these Pharisees. When you hear the words of the Lord Jesus, and when He tells you that being a Baptist is not enough, being a Methodist isn't enough, being an Episcopalian is not enough, giving your money is not enough, living a good life is not enough, working in the YMCA is not enough—when He tells you that you are a sinner and you must be born again—you can take offense, get angry with God, or you can humble yourself and be saved.

III. Do Not Get Offended When Your Expectations Are Not Met

I tell you a third category of persons who get offended at God. Some people get offended when they're persecuted for doing right. Other people get offended when they're exposed for doing wrong. Here's a third way that people get offended, and many of them are people that I've known: people get offended at God when their expectations are not met. They have an idea that if they give their hearts to Christ, certain things are going to work out a particular way.

Turn with me to John chapter 6, if you will for a moment—John chapter 6, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 57. Let me give you the background for this passage. Now, Jesus has just fed the five thousand, and because He fed the five thousand, the multitudes are following Him. And, it's very obvious that the reason they're following Him is because He's fed the five thousand. Now, begin in verse 57. Well, let's begin in verse 54: Jesus said, *“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him”*—now, I want to say, to Jews, to talk about eating somebody's flesh, that was cannibalism. And, drinking blood, they were taught in the Old Testament, that is one thing you would not do is drink even animal blood, and here's Jesus talking about drinking His blood. To say the least, this was very gross and repugnant to them. And then, He says in verse 57—*“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: [even] so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is [a] hard saying; who can hear it? [And] when Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?”* (John 6:54–61) There it is again; there's our word again: *“[Does] this offend you?”* (John 6:61) You see, over and over again, people were getting offended. They were getting offended at the Lord—the way that the Lord was doing things.

Now, what had happened is this: they had come to follow the Lord Jesus. The multitudes were following Him, but they were following Him after they saw Him feed the five thousand. They were miracle mongers. They were following Him for the wrong motivation. Now, why were they following the Lord Jesus?

A. Some Followed the Lord for Political Motives

Well, some were following Him for political motivation. Look in chapter 6, verse 15, and it's very clear. You're in John chapter 6; look in verse 15: *“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed*

again into a mountain himself alone.” (John 6:15) They said, “Well, we’re finally going to balance the budget.” That’s what they said right here. “Why, here’s a man who can feed the multitudes. This is the man we want for president. We’re gonna take Him and make Him a king.” They’re going to take Him by force and say, “Now, you are going to be our king!” But, our Lord just simply went around them and withdrew Himself from them. What they were looking for, some who followed Jesus, was someone who would take the shackles of Rome away, someone who would open the windows of heaven and give them power like they’ve never known before. But, Jesus’ kingdom was not of this world.

Now, you know there are folks just like this today. They think, “Boy, if I make Jesus king, there can’t anybody stand against me or harm me any more.” The same thing that Rome was to them you see as your enemies today, and you just say, “Well, if I give my heart to Jesus, then I’m not going to have any more persecution or trials.”

B. Some Followed the Lord for Material Motives

Now, there are some who came, therefore, for political motives. There were others who followed Him for material motives. Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 26. The same chapter now—John chapter 6 and verse 26: “*Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, [You] seek me, not because [you] saw the miracles, but because [you] did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*” (John 6:26) The only reason they followed Jesus was they liked the bread that He fed them with, and whatever buttered their bread determined their conduct.

C. Jesus Spoke About Spiritual Motives

Now, why were they offended? Some were following Him wanting to make Him a king. Some were following Him thinking this: “I’ll never have any more material want.” Some had political motives. Some had material motives. But, Jesus turned to them and started talking to them about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, feeding on Him. That is, He was talking to them about spiritual motivation.

Now, people join churches today. They have the wrong expectations. Sometimes they give their hearts to Christ, or they believe in Him—so they say. They think, “Now, I’m going to throw off—no more oppression, no more problems. Christ is King. He’s going to put down my enemies.” Other people come, and they say, “I gave my heart to Christ, and now I’m going to have every one of my needs met. He is the heavenly cafeteria. I don’t have to worry any more.”

And, very frankly, folks, I am concerned—really concerned—about a lot of people. They give their hearts to Christ, and then they go off to some of these seminars that are being taught across the land today—these prosperity seminars, who say, “If you will do this, and this, and this, and this, you will prosper.” And, these people teach, you know, “Give, and you’ll get rich.” And, many of them teach, “If you’ll give to me, then you’ll get

rich.” You know, you get a letter in the mail—a man says, “If you will send me a hundred dollars, God will increase it tenfold and you’ll get a thousand dollars.” Next time somebody sends you one of those letters, you just write ’em back and say, “I tell you what: you send me the hundred dollars and let God give you the thousand dollars.” But, there are people just like that: they have the idea... And, some of them go to even better seminars than that—seminars that teach principles: “Here are twelve principles: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Put those twelve principles in the machine, turn the crank, and out comes a blessing.” And, it doesn’t work that way, and they get disappointed. Their expectations are not met.

I’ve seen it happen so many times. A person says, “All right, I lived by these principles. I put my children in a Christian school. I did as Pastor Rogers told me. I brought my tithe down to the church. I did this; I did that, and it just hasn’t worked out.” There are a lot of folks like that. Do you know anybody like that? I mean, it just doesn’t work out. Now, it’s not to say that the principles are wrong. The principles are right. But, those are principles, not contracts. And, every so often, God doesn’t cause it to work out just like you think it ought to work out. And, you’re liable to say, “Well, it’s not paying off. I thought if I gave my heart to Him, He would be my King and He would be my supply and I don’t have to worry.” And folks, I’ve seen this happen so many times—when people just fall away because their expectations are not met.

Down in Florida where I went to school, there’s a place called Ponce de Leon, a little town. They say it was discovered by the Spanish explorer, Ponce de Leon. He was there looking for what he thought was the Fountain of Youth. He had heard somewhere there’s a fountain in the new world that, if you drank the water of that fountain, it would erase the wrinkles from your face, your hair would be black as a raven’s wing, you would never be old or falter in steps, and if persons would drink of the Fountain of Youth, they’d live forever. Of course, there was no such Fountain of Youth. As a matter of fact, have you ever thought about it? If you could get a pill that would just cause people to live fifty years longer and in perfect health—one pill—people would kill for it, wouldn’t they? If you could say you’ll live fifty years longer in perfect health, people would kill for that one pill. But, there is no such thing. Jesus doesn’t come and promise that we’re going to have a life free of suffering and free of pain and all of this. Folks, there’s no fine print in the contract. He tells you upfront that “I’m not promising all this to you, but,” He said, “what I am promising you is that if you will eat my flesh and drink my blood, I will give you life everlasting.” Don’t be offended with God if things don’t work out just the way you think that they ought to work out.

IV. Do Not Get Offended When God Blesses Someone Else More Than You

Now, I must hurry, but let me tell you one other way that people get offended at God. Sometimes they get offended at God when they're persecuted for doing right. Sometimes they get offended at God when they're exposed for doing wrong. Sometimes they get offended at God when their expectations are not met. They want one thing from Him, and He gives them something else. But now, one other thing.

Turn to Mark chapter 6, if you will, in the Gospel of Mark—Mark chapter 6 and verse 1. This is an episode in the life of the Lord Jesus: *“And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples [followed] him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him”*—there's our word again—*“they were offended at him. But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty [works], save that he laid his hands [on] a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.”* (Mark 6:1–6)

Now, here's Jesus, who was raised in Nazareth in a carpenter's shop. He grew up with those folks. They knew His family. They knew His mother. They knew His human father—the Lord Jesus. Of course, God was His Heavenly Father. He was born of a virgin. But, they knew His family. They knew His brothers—they knew His sisters—all by name. And then, Jesus begins to preach, and teach, and heal, and do miracles. And, they looked at Him, and they said, “Would you look at that? How does He know all of that? Where'd He get all of that? Who taught Him how to do that? Where did He get such a blessing? Where did that authority come from? We know Him. Hey, that's the little boy from the carpenter's shop. Our children played with Him in the street.” And, they said, “Just who does He think He is? Who does He think He is, telling us all of these things?” They were offended at Him.

Do you know why they were offended at Him? Because of the blessings that God had blessed Him with that they didn't have. Folks, don't get offended when God blesses someone more than He blesses you. Don't get offended at another person's blessing. Don't get offended at another person's blessing. That's why they were offended. They were offended because of what God had done for Him, for His own dear Son! Now, they didn't know, of course, who He was. All they saw right then is what He was doing. They didn't understand that He was the Messiah, but they just said, “Where does He get off

telling us these things? How come He has all of these blessings? How come He has all of this power?”

Did you know what's going to cause you to stumble some time in your Christian life? When you're gonna see a brother or sister that's honored of God, when you're gonna see somebody who's more spiritually successful and more blessed than you are, you're going to get offended at God. You're going to say, "Well, now, who does he think he is?" Now, by the way, you'll never get offended at God's blessing on Billy Graham or somebody like that because you don't relate to him. It's when one of your own brothers, or sisters, or family members, or somebody in the town that you grew up with, somebody that you went to high school with—they have a big house and a big car and all of this, and you don't. And, you love God, and you say, "Hey, who does he think he is?" You think that somehow their blessing is your curse.

Little children will be happy with their Christmas toys this Christmas until they run outside and see somebody else has something bigger than they have. You have been so grateful and so thankful for your house until you went out to a party one day to somebody else's house. You said, "Good night! Doesn't her husband work the same place my husband works? Where'd they get all this stuff?" Well, evidently, that hit home, and you get offended. You get offended at the blessing God gives somebody else. Learn this: that God's blessing on them is not your loss. As a matter of fact, your offense at God's blessing will be your loss.

Jesus could do no mighty works for them because of their rotten attitude. Because of their unbelief, what they did in their envy at somebody else, they just shut off the pipeline, because the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to bless them. It's so easy to pout at God, so easy to get offended at God. We get offended when we're persecuted for doing right. We get offended when we're exposed for doing wrong. We get offended when our expectations are not met. We think that the Lord Jesus is going to be to us both King and cafeteria, and He's not. We get offended when somebody else is blessed more than we're blessed. But, Jesus said, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that [you] not be offended*" (John 16:1)—"*blessed is he [who is] not offended in me.*" (Matthew 11:6; Luke 7:23)

Horatio Spafford was a godly and wonderful businessman. Horatio Spafford lived about a hundred years ago, the 1870s. He founded the WMCA in Chicago. Horatio Spafford worked with Dwight L. Moody on many campaigns. He was a godly man, loved the Lord with all of his heart—very wealthy. And then, there came that fire in Chicago in 1873, and that fire just decimated Chicago and took away Spafford's business. And, almost overnight, his means of a comfortable living were taken from him. About the only thing he had left was his house, and his wife, and his four beautiful daughters—little girls. He tried for about a year to get things together. The distress was taking its toll

upon Anna, his wife. So, Spafford had the idea that he would send Anna overseas to rest. He would send her to France, and they would rest there with some friends. So, he took her from Chicago to New York and put her and the four girls on the biggest steam ship that was in existence in that day, and they set sail for Europe. He went back to Chicago. He was going to join them later. He was going to go back and do some work.

And so, Anna Spafford and the four girls were sailing and then, about this time of the year, in November, there was a sailing ship that rammed the steamer. The sailing ship I think was called the Tri-Star or something like that, and it rammed that steamer and cut it in half. Anna Spafford was on board with her children. She clutched the littlest baby to her bosom. The older girl, Maggie, who was twelve, said, "Mother, don't be afraid. The sea is in His control." That's the last thing she said because the ship sank like a rock. It sank in twelve minutes—just went down. And, Anna Spafford had her youngest child clutched to her, and a falling spar hit her; and the child was knocked from her hands, and she went under the water. When she came up out of the water, she was pulled into a lifeboat, and she was one of only twenty-two out of a passenger list of five hundred that survived there off Newfoundland. A ship picked her up. She spent many, many days and weeks aboard that ship, cold, without adequate food and clothing, 'til the ship finally arrived at Wales. And, when the ship arrived at Wales, she was able to send a message back to Horatio Spafford, her husband, back in Chicago.

Now, he had learned there'd been a disaster, but he didn't know whether she was dead or alive. She sent Horatio Spafford a wire, and that wire had these two terse words in it: "Saved alone." Horatio Spafford was heartbroken, but he was grateful to God that his wife was still alive. He went to New York, got on a ship prepared to sail to Wales to be with his wife. As they were sailing, they came to a place where the captain of the ship said, "Mr. Spafford, as best as I can determine, this is the place where the ship went down. This is the place where your four daughters are in a watery grave." Mr. Spafford thanked him, and he went to his cabin; and he sat down, and he began to pour out his thoughts on paper. He began to write, and he wrote those words that you and I have sung so many times:

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
[Or] when sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

[...]

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials [shall] come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,*

And...shed His own blood for my soul.

Then, he wrote this prayer:

*[O] Lord haste the day, when...faith shall be sight,
[And] the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound...the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

—HORATIO G. SPAFFORD

When I read that story, I thought of Psalm 119, verse 165. Here's what God's Word says. God's Word gives a great, great promise: "*Great peace [hath] they [that] love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*" (Psalms 119:165) Put it in your margin: Psalm 119, verse 165: "*Great peace [hath] they [that] love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*" (Psalms 119:165)

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer with me? Father God, help us, that we'll not take offense when things don't work the way we think they ought but, Lord, to say with Job, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust...him*" (Job 13:15); to say with those Hebrew children, "Our God is able to deliver us, but if not, we're not going to bow down before this pagan idol." (Daniel 3:17–18) And Lord, I pray today that many in this building will give their hearts to Christ and be wonderfully saved. In His precious name. Amen.

"Well, Adrian, today when you preached, you told me that if I give my heart to Jesus, I may get persecuted. You told me that if I follow the Lord Jesus, I may sometimes get disappointed. You told me that if I followed the Lord Jesus, heartaches and trials may come my way and God may bless somebody else more than He blesses me. And, now you're going to ask me to give my heart to Jesus?" Absolutely—absolutely. *If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give every one of them to Jesus Christ.* I'm just telling you this, friend: you give your heart to Jesus; trust Him to save you. There's no fine print in the contract. He is all that He promised to be and more. And, you're going to find out that when you have peace like a river or when sorrows like sea billows roll, He will never leave you nor forsake you. That much I can promise.

And so, if you'd like to give your heart to Jesus, when we stand and sing this invitational hymn, if you'd like to be saved, if you'd like to become a child of God, if today you will believe on Him and trust Him as your Lord and Savior, I want you to show that by leaving your seat and coming forward, telling one of these ministers, "Today I'm trusting Christ." He paid your sin debt with his blood on the cross. You're not saved by joining a church or getting baptized or living a good life; you're saved by faith in the crucified Son of God. And, if you will put your faith today where God put your sins—on Jesus—He'll save you today. So, when we begin to sing, don't look around to see what

anyone else is going to do. If you want Christ, you step out and come.

And then, secondly, if you are already saved and you need a church home, I'm going to ask you to step forward and come down one of these aisles and tell the minister—he'll be standing right here—you just tell him, "I want to place my membership here." Now, if you're up in the balcony, someone up there is there to receive you. Let's stand together as we sing.

When the Spirit Speaks

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 4, 2001

Main Scripture Text: John 16:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Truth About the Sinner's Basic Problem
- II. The Truth About the Savior's Bountiful Provision
- III. The Truth About Satan's Broken Power

Conclusion

Introduction

Jesus, the center of our joy. Take your Bibles, turn to John chapter 16, and, in just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 7. The title of the message: "When the Spirit Speaks."

There are some things that you will never learn in school, some things that you will never figure out intellectually, the things you will never, never, ever know until you lay your intellectual pride in the dust and let God the Holy Spirit speak to you about these three tremendous truths.

Now, folks, truth is so very, very important. We have some who have cowardice—they are afraid of the truth. We have some with laziness—they accept half-truth. We have some with arrogance—they think they know all truth. I pray God that you'll have humility today and ask God the Holy Spirit to speak to you the truth.

Now, here are these three tremendous truths. Beginning in verse 7, Jesus is talking about His going to heaven and the Holy Spirit coming to earth, and He says, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you—now, boys and girls, that means it is better for you, necessary for you—that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

Now, the word Comforter is the word that means paraclete or advocate or lawyer, somebody who comes alongside of you to take care of you. Jesus said, "I'm going to heaven, but I will send the Holy Spirit to you." Now, notice verse 8: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world, number one, of sin; number two, of righteousness; number three, of judgment." Those are the three things that you will never understand apart from the Holy Spirit: sin, righteousness, and judgment. You say, "Well, Adrian, they sound simple to me." Hang on and listen now.

Jesus goes on to describe what He's talking about in verse 9: "Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

Now, I want us to learn those three things today, and I pray God that He will give me the mind of Christ, the tongue of the learned. I pray God that He will open your heart. I pray God that the Holy Spirit of God will speak to you today and help you to understand these things, because I can articulate, but only God the Holy Spirit can write them upon your heart.

I. The Truth About the Sinner's Basic Problem

What are these three tremendous truths that you will learn when the Spirit of God speaks? Number one: the truth about the sinner's basic problem—the truth about the sinner's basic problem. What is the sinner's basic problem?

Look, if you will, in verse 9: "Of sin, because they believe not on me." Now, what is man's basic problem? Well, first of all, a man is a sinner because of what he is. He's a born sinner. Put in your margin Ephesians 2, verse 3, that says, "we are by nature the children of wrath." Man is born with a sinful nature. He comes into this world with a sinful nature, and, therefore, unless there's a change, he's hopelessly lost, because he has a nature that given to sin.

Somewhere I read about a missionary who went to the mission field. And they showed her where the missionary residence was, and it was a kind of a nice little cottage, but the floor was filthy. And so she, being a good housekeeper, decided she would scrub the floor. And she scrubbed the floor, but she didn't seem to be able to get the dirt up. She put on more water, more suds.

Finally, she got down on her hands and knees and just kept scrubbing, but it was dirty. She'd scrub—it was dirty. She'd scrub—it was dirty. She would rinse it, scrub again—it's still dirty. Somebody said, "Madam, I hate to tell you, but that is a dirt floor." What she was doing was just simply scrubbing a dirt floor, and the more she scrubbed the more dirt came up. Now, folks, you can never take your sinful nature and clean it up, because your sinful nature is like that dirt floor.

Man is a sinner, basically, because of what he is. Now, you may not have done so many bad things, but God looks at your nature. If you were to see a dog foaming at the mouth, and a dog acting strange, and you could tell the dog was rabid, that dog would be caged and destroyed, not for what the dog had done—he may not have bitten anybody—but what he is capable of doing. Friend, we are sinners not only for what we've done, but what we are capable of doing. So, man is a sinner because of what he is.

Secondly, man is a sinner because of what he has done. Romans 3, verse 23, says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Think, friend, of the deeds that you've done.

Now, we sit here in church this morning well dressed, sing these hymns, but think of those things that have come out of our hearts. Think of the lies that have been told. Think of the cursing that has been done. You say, "Well, I didn't mean anything by it. Yes, I took God's name in vain. I didn't really mean anything by it." That, friend, is a part of your guilt, that you could take the name of God and not mean anything by it.

God says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." One of these days, you'll meet every curse word. Think of the gossip that you've told when you used your tongue to slander somebody else's character. Think of the disobedience to your parents. Think of the dishonesty. Think of all of those things you've done. You say, "Well, I haven't done that much." Did you ever steal a toy out of your neighbor's yard? Did you ever steal a nickel off your mother's dresser? Did you ever cheat in school? You say, "Those are small sins." Friend, I want to remind you that God doesn't grade on the curve. We are sinners for what we are. We are sinners for what we have done.

Think of your thought life. You hated—God wrote down murder. You lusted—God wrote down adultery. Man is a sinner because of what he is. Man is a sinner because of what he's done. Man is a sinner because of what he has not done.

Why did God make you? To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him: that's why God made you. If you've not known Him, loved Him, and served Him, then you've been walking on God's green earth, eating God's food, using God's sunshine, breathing God's air, and not returning to God that which is His, which is glory to Him.

But all of these things are not man's basic problem. Man's basic problem is not that he's a sinner because of what he is. Man's basic problem is not that he's a sinner because of what he has done. Man's basic problem is not a sinner, dear friend, because of what he has not done: that is, giving God glory.

Man is a sinner, according to verse 9, for not believing—for not believing. That's something that only the Holy Spirit of God can convict you of. Jesus said, when He is come, when the Spirit of God is come, He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not. Now, you say, "Oh, well, that's not a big sin." No, friend, that is the great sin. That is the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin, the sin of sins. The greatest sin is not believing.

Now, you say, "Well, it doesn't seem so bad. Murder is worse than that. Rape is worse than that." No, God says unbelief is the greatest sin. You say, "Well, I don't agree with it." I wouldn't expect you to agree with it unless the Holy Spirit of God teaches you.

When the Holy Spirit of God teaches you, you're going to understand why the Holy Spirit of God will come and help you to see that this is the great sin.

Now, it may not seem as great. Over here is a mountain of garbage. Over here is a teaspoonful of tasteless, but deadly, poison. Now, this may seem greater than this, but this is the deadly poison. The great sin is the sin of unbelief. It is the crowning sin. It is the proof a man's wickedness. And it, my friend, is the sin that will damn you forever: not believing.

Now, you say, "I don't agree with that." Think with me for a moment; and I pray God the Holy Spirit of God will teach you as I preach, that you will understand that this is the greatest sin, and with it you pay the greatest price. As a matter of fact, this greatest sin is not often committed in the house of prostitution. It's not committed in the tavern. It's committed in the church house when the gospel is preached.

You know, somebody says, "Well, yes, I admit I told a lie. Yes, I admit I stole an answer in school. Yes, I'll admit that I lost my temper, or I read a girlie magazine, but Adrian, are you trying to tell me that God would send me to hell forever and ever and ever because of that? I mean, that would be like putting a man in the penitentiary for life because he stole a loaf of bread. The punishment doesn't fit the crime. I mean, after all, isn't God just?" Friend, here's the whole point. God is not going to let you go to hell because you stole a loaf of bread, but because you aimed the gun of unbelief at Him and pulled the trigger.

Do you know what unbelief is? Unbelief is wickedness, consummate wickedness. Unbelief is the refusal of Almighty God. Unbelief is saying, "God, You go Your way; I'll go mine. It is my life. I will not trust You with it. I will not give it to You. I am my own person."

You see, unbelief is the parent sin. It is the sin of which all other sins come, from which all other sins come. Why did Adam and Eve sin in the Garden of Eden? Basically, it was unbelief.

Why does a man tell a lie today? Unbelief. He can't trust God to get him out of the mess that he's in. Only the Holy Spirit of God can convict you that there is no greater sin than unbelief. Unbelief says, "God, you're not worthy of my faith, you're not worthy of my trust, you're not worthy of my love. I don't want you in my life." "Well, Adrian, I can't help it. I'm just not superstitious. I'm not religious. I can't help it, if I can't believe."

Friend, that's where you're wrong—that's where you're wrong. The Holy Spirit of God will enable you to believe. That's the reason the Bible says in the Book of Hebrews, the third chapter, "Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Unbelief does not come out of the head; it comes out of the heart. It is a predisposition against Almighty God. It is not trusting the God who loves you.

Now, I can preach that, but one of these days you'll understand that the greater sin—the mother sin, the parent sin, the sin of sins, the crowning sin—is to refuse Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior; that He suffered, bled, and died for you, reached out His hand to you, sent the Holy Spirit of God to convict you, sent the Word of God, brought you here today, and you refuse to believe in Him. A courtroom may convict you of crimes. Conscience may convict you of wrongdoing. But only the Holy Spirit of God can truly convict you of sin. Yes, man is a sinner because of what he is. Yes, man is a sinner because of what he's done. But the greater sin—the sin of sins, the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin, the damning sin—is the sin of not believing.

Let me tell you what the Lord Jesus Christ said, and I want you to put this scripture down in your Bible—John 3 and verse 18—listen to it: “He that believeth on him—on whom? On Jesus—is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed...”—not because he told a lie, not because he stole, not because he committed adultery; those sins have been paid for, but—“because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

He that believes is not condemned. You come with faith, and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Refuse the Lord Jesus Christ and you are condemned, because you have not believed. You have refused Him. That is the greatest sin, and with it, it brings the greatest penalty.

II. The Truth About the Savior's Bountiful Provision

Now, here's the second truth that you'll never understand until God the Holy Spirit teaches. Not only the truth about man's basic problem, which is unbelief, his basic problem; but, number two, the truth about the Savior's bountiful provision. What is the truth about the Savior's bountiful provision? The Holy Spirit is come.

When He speaks, He speaks of righteousness, Jesus said, “because I go to My Father and you see Me no more.” What is the Savior's bountiful provision? You say, “He came to heal.” No. “He came to teach.” Not primarily. You say, “He came to help the poor.” No. He came to seek and to save that which is lost.

He came as a Savior, and He came to provide righteousness. He came to provide righteousness, and was virgin born, lived a sinless life, took my sin, your sin, our sin, upon Himself, hung upon that cross, and with His blood paid the sin debt, then went into that dark tomb, came out the third day, ascended to heaven, it was done. All that He came to do was done. He said, “I have finished the work.” He's speaking to the Father, “I've finished the work Thou gavest Me to do. And now I am going back home. I've done

the work that God told me to do. Now, I am ascending the high hills of glory, and the Holy Spirit of God is going to come, and He will convict you of the righteousness that you can have through Me.”

Now, the world’s idea of righteousness is just as warped as the world’s idea of sin. Now, the world’s idea of sin is that man is a sinner because of what he does. No, he does what he does because he’s a sinner. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he’s a liar. The sin is in the heart.

But the world’s idea of righteousness is just as warped. The world thinks that a man is a sinner if he does wrong. He thinks the man is righteousness if he does right, and somehow that God is like Santa Claus, making a list, checking it twice, going to find out who’s naughty and nice. And one of these days we’re going to die, and our bad works are going to put on the scales on this side, and our good works on the scales on this side, and God’s going to weigh it all out. And if our good works outweigh our bad works, then He’s going to say, “You made it.” If our bad works outweigh our good works, He’s going to say, “You missed it.” That’s the world’s idea of righteousness.

But I want you to listen to these scriptures here. God talked about His ancient people, Israel, and here’s what He said about them in Romans chapter 10 and verse 3. Put it down. The Bible says, “They, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Now, ignorance is terrible, friend, but when it comes to heaven or hell, it is tragic. “They, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Most of the people in America are self-righteous, strutting their way to hell, thinking they’re too good to be damned. Now, your only hope of ever appearing righteous before God is in the finished work of the ascended Christ. When Jesus went to heaven, when He said, “I’m going to heaven,” what did He do when He went to heaven? He went and presented His blood on the mercy seat there in heaven before the Father as an atonement for our sin.

Now, think with me for a moment. If you could be accounted righteous before God by doing good deeds, by giving your money, by helping the poor, by being religious, being kind, if you could be counted righteous for doing that—listen to me now—why did Jesus die? Why did He suffer on that cross, if you could be saved by your own righteousness?

I submit to you that, if you could be saved by doing good, then Calvary was the blunder of the ages. Now, you think about it. Let me give you a verse of Scripture. Paul said, in Galatians chapter 2, verse 21: “For I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if

righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." What does that mean?

When you try to earn your salvation, you frustrate the grace of God. "For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." It means He died for nothing. If you could, by keeping the Ten Commandments—that's what it means by law—if you could work your way to heaven, tell me, friend, why did Jesus die? What is the purpose of the cross?

Are you telling me that God would allow His dear, darling, precious Son to die in unmentionable agony upon that cross when you could be saved without it? He just let Him die. Friend, if that is true, I'd hate to meet that God in a dark alley. I have no respect for a God who would allow Jesus Christ to die that way upon a cross, to be butchered on a Roman cross, when you could be saved by just being good.

Look at that verse again: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." But most of the people in America are egomaniacs, strutting to hell, thinking they're too good to be damned. Only the Holy Spirit of God will convict you that the great sin, the basic sin, is unbelief. Only the Holy Spirit of God can convict you that you do not have half a hallelujah of a chance to go to heaven apart from the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, "Well, I'm a good person, Pastor Rogers." Well, let me tell you what God says about you. Put it down—Isaiah chapter 64, and verse 6: "For we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags." All—not your bad deeds; your good deeds. In the sight of God, just like a filthy rag. It's the word that used to wrap the lepers' oozing sores. All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Now, only the Holy Spirit of God can teach you that. You see, you can make a deadly mistake by depending upon self-righteousness rather than Christ's righteousness.

Now, when you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, what does He do? Well, when you believe on Him, number one, here's the kind of righteousness that He gives you. Number one: He changes what you are, the moment you believe on Him. Remember, we said a man is a sinner because of what he is. Well, Jesus changes what he is. Christians are not just nicer people; they're new creatures. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." God gives you a new nature. When I received Christ as a teen, God put a new nature in my heart, such a new nature that the teachers were saying, "What happened to Adrian Rogers?" There was a radical change.

But not only does He change what we are, friend, He forgives what we've done. Remember I said we were sinners for what we've done? Well, every stain, every blur, every blot, every blemish, is washed whiter than snow, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

But not only does He, friend, change what we are. Not only does He forgive what

we've done, but He also gives what we need. What do we need? We need righteousness. Now, let me give you a verse of Scripture—Romans 4, verses 5 and 6: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." God just puts righteousness on our account. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

Now, we don't use that word impute very much, but it means, put on your account. Next time you go to Goldsmith's to buy something, just say, "Impute it." Don't say, "Charge it"; say, "Impute it." Put it on my account.

Listen to what God says in this scripture. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works." God just puts that on your account. How glorious that is.

You say, "I don't understand it." That's the reason I'm praying God the Holy Spirit will open your heart today. When the Spirit of God is come, He will convict you of righteousness, the only righteousness that you can have apart from Him. Listen to me.

The worst form of badness is human goodness, when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. The worst form of badness is human goodness, when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. You say, "Well, I believe I had a little goodness in me." Your goodness, your righteousness, is as filthy rags in the sight of God.

There are about 6 billion people on Planet Earth. If you were to put all 6 billion people in a single line, and pass a golden cup down that line, and let each person put all of his righteousness in that cup, when you've gone all around the world a number of times and each person putting all of his personal righteousness in that cup, there wouldn't be enough righteousness in that cup to save one man. There's no righteousness. "There's none righteous, no not one."

Now, people don't understand that. They sit in churches, thinking they're doing a wild favor by getting here, and they don't understand that they need to be twice-born. Again, I tell you, if righteousness come by the law, then pray tell me, why did Jesus die? The Holy Spirit of God has come to teach what man's basic problem is, and that is sin. The Holy Spirit of God is come to teach what Christ the Savior's bountiful provision is, and that is righteousness.

III. The Truth About Satan's Broken Power

Now, thirdly, here's the third truth that you'll never understand apart from the Holy Spirit, and it's the truth about Satan's broken power—the truth about Satan's broken

power.

Now, Jesus said He's going to come and talk to you about, sin, righteousness, and judgment. Now, He describes judgment in verse 11. He says, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Now, notice the tense there. He doesn't say the prince of this world, who is Satan, is going to be judged. Friend, Satan is already judged.

Now, you need to understand this, because some people think that we're still waiting to see the outcome. Oh, no. When Jesus faced the cross, here's what Jesus said, in John chapter 12, and verse 31: "Now, is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Not when I come 2,000 years later. "Now, is the judgment of this world."

Friend, when Jesus died on the cross, man was doing the most wicked, malevolent thing he could do: God was gaining the greatest victory. When Jesus bowed His head and died, Satan's kingdom was crushed; Satan's back was broken; Satan became a condemned felon. Sentence has been passed upon him. Judgment is over. He rules a doomed domain. He sails a sinking ship. Satan is ruined. He is ruined. He's devastated. The prince of this world is already judged. That's the foolishness of Satan worship. Why follow a loser?

Man, hell is prepared for the devil and his angels. God didn't make hell for you, but I'll tell you something. Everybody in this building today is either believing in Christ or you're not believing in Christ. And those of you who are believing in Christ, one day you'll be like Him. That's what our Christian faith is about. One day you will be like Jesus. That is what God is up to. God is up to making people like Jesus Christ, to be conformed to the image of His Son. That's what it's all about. You're looking at a man who will one day be like Jesus Christ.

But I want to tell you something. You fail to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you fail to believe in Him, you trust your own self-righteousness, and you're going to begin moving in this direction, and one of these days you're going to be the prefect of Satan himself. You'll be just like him. You will be transformed into the image of Satan, and you will go to a hell prepared for the devil and his angels. It's a frightening thought.

I want to ask you a question: When you get to where you're headed, where will you be? Everybody's headed somewhere—everybody's headed somewhere. There are those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, have received His righteousness, who will one day be like Him. But if you have not, I want to tell you that judgment awaits you.

Don't get the idea that there's some colossal contest and we're waiting to see who's going to win: Jesus or the devil. The devil's already lost, and Jesus must reign. His enemies must bite the dust. The truth is mightier than error, and love is stronger than

hate, and holiness is higher than sin. Choose sides carefully, precious friend. Now, it looks like sometimes Satan is winning the battle. Don't be deceived. The prince of this world is judged—is judged.

Some years ago, I read about a spider who tried to build his web on the town clock—you know, these big clocks that stand in the city square. And he put in his little gossamer thread on the hand of the clock and began to build, but the clock just kept moving and kept moving. He had to keep rebuilding over and over again. I want to tell you, Satan tries to build sticky web, but God's hand is moving on toward the climax of this age, and all of Satan's plans are destined to failure.

Conclusion

Let me tell you what I love about this passage of Scripture. The Holy Spirit of God is come to convict the world of man's basic problem, of the sinner's bountiful provision, of Satan's broken power. He's come to convict you of that. But notice the order.

He has come to convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Now, in a court of law, first, the crime; when the crime is proven, then the judgment. That's the order: the crime, the punishment. But with God, the order is different. There is, first of all, sin; then righteousness; and then judgment. God has put righteousness between sin and judgment. You see, God interposed the precious blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if you don't believe, if you refuse, there is no righteousness between sin and judgment. You just die and go to hell. I'm a sinner, by nature, by birth, by practice, but I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, God has interposed His precious blood, and His righteousness stands between me and judgment. I like that. Between me and hell there's a bloody cross, and Jesus is on it.

Friend, if you're not a believer, put your hand up there, and you feel that little heartbeat. That's all there is between you and hell. That's all—just a heartbeat. But if you've given your heart to Jesus, if you've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, if you've said, "My basic problem—my basic problem—is I've not trusted Him, but I trust Him." And then God says, "I'll give you a bountiful provision. I will give you righteousness. And now for you, there is therefore now no condemnation," and you're not belonging to that tribe that's following Satan. You're twice-born. You're heaven-born and heaven-bound.

Oh, I prayed today on my knees that God will help you to understand this, because all I can do is preach it. It is the Holy Spirit of God who will tell you the truth about sin and righteousness and judgment. He'll do it through my words, but He'll teach you, if you'll just open your heart. Lay your pride in the dust, will you, and say, "Speak to me, O God."

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed; no one stirring, no one moving. Oh, how you need Jesus. Don't let your self-righteousness take you to heaven, to hell. Don't think that refusing Jesus is a small sin. It is the basic sin. Unbelief never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart. If you want to be saved, may I help you to be saved today? Would you pray a prayer like this and pray it from your heart: O God, I'm a sinner because of what I am and what I've done, but my basic sin is I've not believed in Jesus. I've not trusted Him. I've not yielded to Him. O God, the Holy Spirit of God has shown me that today, and I repent of my sin of unbelief, and now I trust Jesus with all of my heart. Lord Jesus, I need righteousness. I can't stand before God with my self-righteousness. Lord, just put righteousness on my account. Oh, thank you, Jesus, for paying with Your rich blood for my sin. Thank you, Jesus, for the cross. Thank You for redemption. Thank You for righteousness that You alone can give. And, Lord God, now I've stepped from death into life. I'm no longer following Satan. I'm no longer following a loser. I belong to You, Jesus, and one day I'll be like You. Praise Your holy name. I love You, Jesus. I love You. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Three Things That You Cannot Learn in School

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 25, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 16:7–9

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”
JOHN 16:8

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Introduction

I want you to take God's Word today and turn, please, to John chapter 16. And I want to talk to you about the convicting, convincing power of the Holy Spirit. The title of the message: Three Things That You Cannot Learn in School. Now, thank God for school, but there are some things that no school teacher can teach you. For that matter, there are some things that no pastor can teach you, no Sunday School teacher can teach you, but only the Holy Spirit can teach you. Now, men, women, boys and girls, by nature, are stunningly ignorant—stunningly ignorant. I think of Nicodemus. He was a master in Israel, a ruler of the Jews. Jesus had remonstrated with him, and said, Aren't you a master in Israel and yet you don't know these things? Jesus was talking to him about spiritual things.

Now, I hope that you'll open your heart today to this truth. Now, this is truth that only the Holy Spirit can give you. You say, Well, Pastor, if only the Holy Spirit can give this truth, then why are you preaching? Because He uses human instruments, He uses the Word of God, but He is the teacher. I've said many times I can preach truth, but only He can impart truth.

Now, look in John chapter 16 and verse 7—Jesus says, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you." Now, the Comforter is the Holy

Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the divine Paraclete. Jesus said, I am going to heaven, but I will send the Holy Spirit to take my place. Now, notice in verse 8: "And when he is come..."—that is, the Holy Spirit—"when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." Now, the word reprove actually means convict or convince. He will convict, He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Those are three things you'll never learn in school: the truth concerning sin, the truth concerning righteousness, and the truth concerning judgment. Notice verse 9: "Of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

Now, I want you to open your heart today to truth, because the need of this hour, beyond the shadow of any doubt, is truth. Truth is the issue. There is cowardice, and there may be some today who are cowards, who are afraid of the truth. There is laziness, that accepts part of the truth. There's arrogance, that thinks it knows all of the truth. And there is true humility before God, that opens one's heart, so that you might receive what the Holy Spirit of God wants to teach. Now, I want to say there are three tremendous truths, that if you've never seen them, you've never been saved. You say, Well, I understand sin, righteousness, and judgment. Maybe you do intellectually, but until the Holy Spirit of God teaches you these things, you will never know them.

I. The Conception of Sin

Now, let's think of them one at a time—three things that you'll never learn in school. First of all deals with the conception of sin. What is sin? Look in verse 9—Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit is come to convince men of sin,"—now, watch it—"because they believe not on me." Now, the Bible teaches that a man is—and a woman, a boy, a girl, a human being—is a sinner for three basic reasons. First of all, he is a sinner because of what he is by nature. He is a natural-born sinner. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3, that he is, by nature, a child of wrath. Your little grandson, your little granddaughter, your precious newborn baby, is, by nature, a child of wrath.

Now, the Holy Spirit of God has to remove a certain kind of ignorance in our heart. We think that men are wicked and sinful because of what they do. We think a man is a sinner because he lies, because he steals, because he commits adultery, or because he kills. He is not a sinner because he does these things; he does these things because he is a sinner. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he is a liar. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he is a thief. These things, Jesus said, come out of the heart.

I've told you before, if you find an apple with a wormhole, you needn't worry all that much; it doesn't mean there's a worm in the apple. It means there was a worm in the apple. The worm did not eat his way in; he ate his way out. The worm was born in the

apple. You say, How'd he get in there? The egg was laid in the blossom, and then, that worm was hatched, and ate his way out of that apple. Now, there is in the very blossom of human nature a thing that the Bible calls sin, and what we see coming out is what has been born on the inside. You see, a man is a sinner because of what he is.

If there's a dog that's rabid, that dog is killed. Perhaps he's not bitten anybody. Why is he killed? Not because of what he has done, but what he is capable of doing. You see, the sin that we're capable of doing is the sin that is down in our hearts, latent, that God sees, whether it ever comes to the surface or not, whether the worm ever gets to the surface or not, whether the dog ever bites anybody or not. That's the reason a reformation will never do for sin. You tell a man he's a sinner—if he's a man of this world, without the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he says, Well, I'll do better; I'll quit. Maybe he's a drunkard, and he says, Well, I won't drink anymore. Maybe he's an adulterer, and he says, I will not commit adultery any more.

Take a log out of the forest, cut it down, and bring it to the sawmill. That log may be crooked. Put it on the cradle there in the sawmill, and run it through that sawmill, and the saw, that big buzzing blade, cuts off one side. Turn that log, run it through again, and it'll cut off the other side. Turn it again, and cut off the other, and then, finally, you have a log, from the outside perfectly square, perfectly straight; but look at it from the end, and the heart is still crooked. That's the way men are; that's the way reformation is. You may clean up the outside, you may say, Well, I am good, I am as straight and square as a man can be, but the Bible says that your heart—your heart—is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Therefore, if a man is a drunkard, and he stops drinking, without getting saved, he'll go to hell sober. What I'm trying to say is this: that man has a problem, and the problem is on the inside; and you might as well admit it—you are a sinner, not primarily because of what you do, but because of what you are.

Now, people have tried to explain away sin. The evolutionist says that man is a sinner because he hasn't had sufficient time to develop. The environmentalist says that man is a sinner because he's been molded and shaped by sources on the outside, and what he needs is a better atmosphere. The educator says there is no such thing as sin—there is only ignorance; and if we could educate a man, we could be able to deal with his sin. But let me tell you what a Minnesota crime commission report said, studying the matter of juvenile delinquency—I want you parents to listen to this. Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it—his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these, and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness, which would be murderous, if he were not so helpless. He's dirty—he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children—not just certain children, but all children—are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their

self-centered world of infancy, if given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy every one of them, every child would grow up a criminal—that's your little baby. You say, Not my little baby. Yes, your little baby. He is, by nature, a child of wrath.

Now, why is a man a sinner? He's a sinner, number one, because of what he is. And then, because of what he is, he does what he does. Now, if you say, Well, I take umbrage at the fact that you say I'm a sinner by nature. All right, well then, let's talk about what you do. Romans chapter 3, verse 10: "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one." I want you to say in your heart, Not even me—agree with God: "there's 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." Folks, get that in your heart. Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Now, your nature is the poisoned well. Your sins that you do are the poisoned bitter water that comes out of that well. You say, I don't kill and I don't steal. What about your thought life? Jesus said lust is adultery. Jesus said hate is murder. Jesus destroyed a civilization with a flood because of the imaginations of men's hearts. Now, you know the word sin has gone out of vogue today. We have redefined sin and redefined it out of existence. Do you know what the word abortion used to mean? It used to mean a miscarriage. If a baby inadvertently died in the mother's womb, that was a sad and a tragic thing, and they said, Well, that baby was aborted. What the real word is, is not abortion; it is infanticide, killing a baby; but now, we don't like abortion, so the abortionists have changed that word, even. Now, they take the killing of a baby, and they call that abortion, and they say, Now, let's see if we can get a nicer sounding phrase, and so they call it pro-choice. Doesn't that sound a lot better than abortion? It certainly sounds better than infanticide. But you know, they didn't like that so much, they said, let's get something better than pro-choice; let's use reproductive rights. And then, Let's—oh no, that's not enough—let's call it reproductive freedom. No, let's call it killing babies; let's call it killing babies, rather than reproductive freedom.

But you see, we don't like the idea of sin. You know, the Bible speaks of lust. Well, we don't call it lust. What do we call it? Adult entertainment. And we look around and see the rape, sexual violence, and immorality, rampant in our land, but the word lust sounds too much like sin, doesn't it? The Bible calls sexual immorality, the Bible calls it fornication. The Bible calls it adultery. Do you know what we call it? Sexually active—that's what they call fornication today. That teenager is sexually active. And what do we call adultery? Having an affair. You see what we've done? You know what the Bible called a woman who sells sex? The Bible calls her a whore and a harlot. You know what the Bible calls a man who pays for her services? The Bible calls him a whoremonger. What do we call them today? A call girl. What do we call him today? A playboy. The

Bible calls sexual perversion sodomy, calls these people who do this sodomites. What do we call them today? Homosexuals. We call them gays. What do we call it today? An alternative lifestyle, as if God has several lifestyles, and you can pick the one you want. What have we done? We have defined sin out of existence. But the Bible calls sin sin, and the Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." A man is a sinner because of what he is. He is by nature a child of wrath. A man is a sinner because of what he does, and he does what he does because he is what he is.

But what does our text say? What does the Bible say that the Holy Spirit has come to convict men of? Look again, if you will, and see what the Bible says, the Holy Spirit says, in verse 9: "He is come to convict men of sin, because they believe not on me"—now, that's the part that most of us can understand thus far. But when we get to this part, then we see that the Holy Spirit of God convicts a man of sin, not only because of what he is, not only because of what he has done, but the Bible convicts him of sin because of what he has not done—"of sin, because he believes not." When you talk about sin—telling lies, stealing, lust—the average American says, Well, yes, everybody's got his little faults, everybody makes mistakes; but I don't think that God would let me go to hell forever because I told a lie. That would be like putting a man in a penitentiary for life for stealing a loaf of bread. Oh, friend, when you understand the nature of sin, you can't help the way you were born, and therefore you do what you do because you were born with a sinful nature. But, oh, there is a sin—a damning sin, a horrible sin, a wicked sin, a vile sin, a terrible sin, a condemning sin—that most of the world never thinks about. Do you know what it is? Not believing on Jesus Christ—not believing on Jesus Christ. "Of sin, because they believe not on me." What is sin? Sin is a clenched fist in the face of God. Sin is failing to bow the knee. Sin is high treason against heaven's king. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you that—only the Holy Spirit. When you see that, when you see that you are guilty of high treason against heaven's king, that you have never bowed the knee to your Maker, the One who died in agony and blood for you upon that cross, when you see that you have ignored, spurned, refused Him, then you'll understand why the Bible calls you a sinner. I pray the Holy Spirit of God will convict you of that.

Put this verse in your margin—John 3, verse 18—Jesus said, concerning himself, the son of Man, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not on him is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Unbelief is the greatest sin, and unbelief is the parent sin; it is the mother sin, the father sin, the sin out of which all other sins are grown. It was unbelief that caused Adam and Eve to sin in the Garden of Eden. Holy Spirit of God, help me to say this, and I pray that people will hear it today, and I pray that those of you on television will listen to this. A courtroom may convict you of crimes, conscience will

convict you of wrong doing, but only the Holy Spirit of God will truly convict you of sin. When you understand what sin is, you'll not be strutting your way to hell thinking you're too good to be damned. When you understand that you have said No to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have never really opened your heart and received Him as your Lord and Savior, then you will say, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. The Holy Spirit of God teaches, first of all, a true conception of sin. "Of sin, because they believe not."

II. The Completion of Sin

Here's the second truth the Holy Spirit will teach you, something you'll never learn in school: not only the conception of sin, but the completion of salvation—the completion of salvation. Look, if you will now, in the next verse, verse 10: "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and you see me no more." He comes to convict of sin and of righteousness, to give a conception of sin and to show the completion of salvation. Now, why does He say, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father"? Because He left the Father's house. He came down through that dark Judean night, out of the ivory palaces, into this world of woe. He lived a sinless, perfect life, as we sang today; He came to that cross, He took my sin, your sin, our sin, upon that cross. He suffered, bled, and died, in agony unmentionable, indescribable horror and pain. He died upon that cross. He was laid in that cold tomb. He came out of that tomb the third day, living and risen, victorious over sin, death, hell, and the grave. He ascended to the Father to present His blood there before the Father in that tabernacle in heaven. That's what He's talking about, when He says, "I go to my Father." I am going back to my Father. It is done. I have paid the price for redemption, and now there is one way—one and only one way—that a man can be righteous—it is through my death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father.

Now, only the Holy Spirit of God can teach you that, because man is ignorant. He is ignorant, not only concerning sin; he's also ignorant concerning righteousness. What does the average person think? The average person thinks he is a sinner if he does wrong; so, therefore, he's righteous if he does right, isn't that right? Isn't that what the average person thinks? The average person thinks that righteousness comes by doing and being good. Put this verse in your margin—Romans 10 and verse 3. Paul spoke of the Jews of his day, and here's what he said about them: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness..."—now, listen to this—"being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

A man can be sincere and be sincerely wrong. Sulfuric acid and water look the same, clear, colorless liquid. H₂O and H₂SO₄—one is water, one is deadly poison. Poor Willy, he's gone from us, his face we'll see no more, for what he thought was H₂O

was H₂SO₄. I mean, if a man sincerely drinks a glass of sulfuric acid, does it matter how sincere he is if he is sincerely dead? The only hope that a man has of righteousness is Jesus.

You say, But, Pastor Rogers, I am not that bad, I'm a pretty good person. That's the reason that Jesus said to the Pharisees, Publicans and sinners and harlots are going to heaven before you will. They were the crowds that sit in church on Sunday morning and when the invitation is given, they'll look around to see if any of those old sinners are going to go forward and give their heart to Jesus Christ. Let me tell you what Isaiah said to the people of his day, in Isaiah chapter 64 and verse 6: "But we are all as an unclean thing..."—and, by the way, the word unclean thing means the bandage that would wrap the leper's putrefying sore—"but we're all as an unclean thing,"—now watch this—"and all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in his sight..."—he didn't say the bad things you do; I'm talking about the things that you boast about—"all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in his sight, and we do all fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."

The only way that you will ever see the portals of heaven, the only way that you can ever go to heaven, is through the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and your faith in that fact. You need to learn this. If there were some other way, if a person could be saved by reformation, if a person could be saved by doing good, then let me ask you a question: If a person could be saved any other way than that mighty cross that we sang about this morning, if a person could be saved any other way, was not then Calvary the blunder of the ages? Think about it. Do you understand Calvary? We sang about it today, dark Gethsemane, dark Calvary. Do you understand that? Do you think that was one of the options whereby people can be saved? Do you mean there is some other way, but God chose to let His Son die in agony and blood, when there could've been some other way? That's the reason that the apostle Paul said, in Galatians 2, verse 21, "I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." What does that mean, in plain English? If you could be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, Calvary was a blunder.

Most of us think we're too good to be damned. I've said before, the worst form of badness is human goodness, when human goodness because a substitute for the new birth. You say, I don't agree with you—and I'm sure you don't—but when the Holy Spirit of God speaks to your heart, then you'll agree. You see, I can't talk you into that. You'll sit here and mentally argue with me; you'll say, I don't agree with that. That's the reason I'm saying, friend, that you'll not learn this in school, and no preacher can teach you this. The Holy Spirit of God will teach you one of these days that you're a sinner, because you've refused the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God will convict you one of these days that the only way—the only way, the only hope of heaven—is to receive

Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, and when you do receive the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to see what He'll do for you.

Remember we said that you're a sinner because of what you are, what you do, and what you've not done? When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness, then He deals with what you are. We are by nature children of wrath. But when we get saved, we become what? Partakers of the divine nature. The Bible calls this the new birth. Christians are not just people who have reformed, they're not just nicer people; Christians are those who have had a change of nature. He changes what you are, and then He forgives what you've done. Remember you do what you do because of what you are; He changes what you are, and He forgives what you've done—every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish, gone, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness—and though our sins be as scarlet, they'll be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they become as wool. Friend, that's the gospel.

But wait a minute—not only does He change what we are, not only does He cleanse what we've done, but He gives what we need, which is righteousness. You see, He took our sin, that we might take His righteousness. These are precious verses I'm going to share with you—Romans 4, verses 5 and 6—put them in your margin: "But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith..."—listen—"his faith is counted for righteousness"—his faith is counted for righteousness—"even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness"—imputeth righteousness—"without works." What does that mean? When you say, Lord Jesus, I believe you died for me upon that cross, I believe you paid my sin debt, I know that I'm a sinner, I need to bow my knee before you and believe on you and trust you, then God says, Yes, I'll come into your heart, I'll give you a new nature, I'll forgive your sin, and then I'll take my righteousness, and I will impute it to you. That means I'll put it on your account. Then how righteous are you? You're as righteous as Jesus Christ, because you have His righteousness.

There was a maid who worked for a man, and she got saved. He was an infidel; he ridiculed her. Her name was Betty. He said, Betty, you claim to be saved; what does it feel like to be saved? She said, I don't think I could explain it where you could understand it. But she said, It feels to me as if I'm standing in Jesus' shoes, and He's standing in mine. A theologian couldn't have said it better. He took my sin; I take His righteousness. I can preach this truth; I pray God the Holy Spirit will teach you this truth. When He is come, He will convict you of sin, He will convict you of righteousness. You will see a proper conception of sin, and you will see a proper completion of salvation, that Jesus ascended to the heavens, back to the Father, to pay that sin debt.

III. The Condemnation of Sin

Now, here's a third and final thing that you'll not learn in school, and you'll not learn from any preacher's preaching, until the Holy Spirit of God brings it to your heart: not only the truth concerning sin, and not only the truth concerning righteousness, but the truth concerning judgment. Continue to read in verse 11—then He says, and here's the third thing: "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." It doesn't say he's going to be judged; this is perfect tense, it means it's already taken place. Who is the prince of this world? The prince of this world is the devil—he's the god of this age, the prince of this world; but Jesus said he has already been judged. The people of this world seem to think that somehow we're waiting on the outcome of things to see who's going to win—Christ or Antichrist, God or Satan. Friend, we sang today about the cross; we called it the mighty cross. With that in mind, remember John 12, verse 31—Jesus, facing that, cross said this: "Now is the judgment of this world. Now—right now—is the prince of this world is cast out." Don't get the idea that one of these days we're going to see how it works out. You know what the average person thinks? The average person has the idea that either somehow the whole scheme of things will be nullified, or that somehow sin will get by, that God will be merciful, even if men do not repent of sin and receive His righteousness. That is not true. Our Lord must reign. His enemies will lick the dust. There's no contest out there. Truth is mightier than error. Love is stronger than hate. Holiness is higher than sin. And our Lord has won the victory.

Now, folks, listen to me. The Holy Spirit of God needs to teach you that Satan's cause is a lost cause, Satan sails a sinking ship. Satan rules a doomed domain; he has already been sentenced, adjudicated a criminal; he has been judged. Sooner or later, he's going to be thrown into that penitentiary, that lake of fire. God did not prepare hell for you. If you go to hell—which you may—but if you go to hell, you'll be an intruder. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 41, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Conclusion

I was watching television last night, and I saw a little bit of a program before I turned it off that dealt with the subject of hell. It was something like the unsolved mysteries, or something like that. And the idea of this program was that in the Middle Ages the church was losing its hold on people, so the church invented the idea of hell to keep people corralled, so that the preachers would have some tool to hold over people's heads to convince them they'd better turn or burn. That was the idea, that somehow this idea of hell was something that Dante or somebody invented. Do you know who the greatest hellfire preacher in the Bible was? JA eA sA uA s—Jesus. Absolute, infinite, fathomless

love—and it was Jesus who warned about hell, and He said that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. And Satan has already been judged. He is a condemned criminal. Sin can't win, and faith can't fail. You need to learn that. Only the Holy Spirit of God can teach you that. Of sin, righteousness, and judgment—the conception of sin, the completion of salvation, the condemnation of Satan: that's what the Holy Spirit of God teaches.

Suppose you're sick, you call the doctor, the doctor gives you an examination, and then you can tell by the look on the doctor's face that he's very worried. You say, Doctor, give it to me straight; don't put it in fancy language. Don't hold out false hope. If I'm that gravely ill, I need to know it. He says, All right, you have an incurable illness; you're going to die. You say, But, Doctor, I'm not ready to die; I've got a lot of living to do. I want to see my children's children. I've got plans. Doctor, isn't there some way that I can live? You said, it's incurable. He said, Well, let me say this. There is a new vaccine, a serum that has just been developed. It is very rare, very expensive, not available; therefore, your case is hopeless. But doctor, doctor, if it's there, I mean if it's somewhere, then get it. The doctor says, Well, do you have any money? Not much, just a little. Doctor says, I'll see what I can do. Imagine in a few days the doctor comes back to your bedside, he's not the man that left the bedside, he looks different, his hair is disheveled, his eyes are sunken back in his face, his clothing is torn, his clothing is bloody, his hands have tremors, he's shaking. And I say, Doctor, where have you been? You look like you've been through hell. What's happened to you, Doctor? He said, I went out to get this medicine for you. He said, I went to the foundations, I got what I could get—that was not enough. I took my own savings out of the bank—that was not enough. I mortgaged my house. Finally, I got enough to get this vial of medicine for you. Then, in my hurry to come to your bedside, I wrecked my automobile. I've just come from a wreck. I had my son in the car with me—my only son, my darling son, the light of my life, my one son. He was killed in the wreck. The blood on my garments is the blood of my son! Here's the medicine—take it, you will live. Suppose you took that vial of medicine, looked at it, and then dashed it on the floor, and the contents ran out in the rug, never to be reclaimed. Suppose you did that—then, would you be able to point a finger in the face of that doctor, and say, Doctor, if I die, it'll be your fault, Doctor, it wouldn't be fair to let me die? No! Of course not! You say, Adrian, that would be absurd. Yes!

Let me ask you another question: If God took heaven's riches, His own dear Son, and if He'd died in agony and blood upon that cross, and you refused such love, then you'll understand why the Bible says, The Holy Spirit has come to convict men of sin, because they believe not on me—"Of sin, because they believe not on me, of righteousness because I go to my Father, of judgment because the prince of this world

is judged."

Many of you need to be saved today. Some have your name on church rolls, but that won't get you to heaven. The devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than from the gutter. Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you're saved, begin to pray for those round about you who are not saved. If you're not certain that you're saved, then right now is the time for you to get certain. Receive the Lord. My prayer—my prayer—is that the Holy Spirit of God has used the message today to speak to your heart, because if the Holy Spirit of God is not speaking to you, you just heard one more sermon, that's all. But if the Spirit of God is saying, Yes, you're the one that needs to be saved, there's no greater sin than to refuse my Son Jesus, and all of your righteousness is as filthy rags, and there's no possible way that your sin can go unjudged, if you don't get saved. If you can hear that, and really hear it, then you will hear what the Holy Spirit of God is saying. Father, I pray today in the name of Jesus, that many will trust in Him and be saved. Lord, You must open hearts. It is Your work. Do it, we pray, in the name of Jesus. Amen. †

God's Answer to Man's Ignorance

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Unknown

Main Scripture Text: John 16:7–11

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

JOHN 16:11

Outline

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Introduction

It is time for us to look into God's Word—and what an exciting time this is as we study together! Tonight, I want to speak to you on this subject: “God's Answer to Man's Ignorance.” Now there is a lot of ignorance around, and I'm not talking about the ignorance of the unlearned; I'm talking primarily about the ignorance of the learned. You know, it was Will Rogers who said, “Everybody is ignorant, just on different subjects.” Amen? So there are a lot of you here tonight who have degrees and high learning, but there is an abominable ignorance in your heart and in your life.

Do you remember that man named Nicodemus? He came to Jesus by night and he asked Jesus some questions. Jesus looked at him and said, “Do you mean to tell me that you are a master in Israel and you don't know this?” Now here was a man who was supremely educated. He had his M.I., but he didn't have his B.A. He was a master of Israel; he had a master's degree; but he'd not been born again. And Jesus talked to this man and told him some things that he could never had known had the Lord Jesus not told him this.

Now the Holy Spirit of God is our teacher tonight. And there are some things that the

Holy Spirit of God can teach you that Adrian Rogers cannot teach you. And there are some things that you can only learn by divine revelation. Let me show you in the Word of God. If you have a Bible, open your Bible to John chapter 16, and I begin reading in verse 7. Jesus is talking about sending the Holy Spirit, and this is what Jesus says: *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;”*—now the word *Comforter* stands for the Holy Spirit—*“but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”* (John 16:7–11)

Ladies and gentlemen, there are three tremendous truths that you will never know until God the Holy Spirit reveals these things to you—three things that you will never understand apart from divine revelation. That’s the reason I prayed before I came out here, “O God, move upon this congregation”; that’s the reason I prayed, “O God, speak through me”—because I can preach truth, but only He can impart truth. I can tell you, but only He can show you. I can make it known, but only He can teach you. Jesus said the Holy Spirit is necessary for men to understand the truth concerning sin, for men to understand the truth concerning righteousness, and for men to understand the truth concerning judgment.

I. The Basic Problem of the Sinner

Now, let’s think, first of all, about the basic problem of the sinner. Why is a man a sinner? Well, look, if you will, again at the scripture in verse 8: *“And when he is come, he will reprove”*—that is, “He will convince and convict”—*“the world of sin...because they believe not on me.”* (John 16:8–9) A man is a sinner basically for three reasons.

A. A Man Is a Sinner Because of What He Is

First of all, a man is a sinner because of what he is. He was born a sinner. David said, *“In sin did my mother conceive me.”* (Psalm 51:5) He didn’t mean that he was born out of wedlock; he meant that “when I was conceived, I was conceived a sinner.” Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, tells us that we are *“by nature the children of wrath.”* (Ephesians 2:3) You have a sinful nature. You were born with it.

I heard of a man over in Northern Italy who was staying in a hotel, an inn, and he thought the floor was very dirty, so he thought he ought to call the maid and have her scrub the floor. But then do you know what he discovered? The floor was made of dirt, and the more she would scrub it, the dirtier it would get. Now there are people who don’t understand human nature: the more you try to clean it up, the worse it gets. There is something inherently evil in our hearts. We are *“by nature the children of wrath.”*

A man is a sinner, first of all, because of what he is. Now the world doesn’t

understand that. The world thinks a man is a sinner because he uses drugs. Or the world thinks a man is a sinner because he steals or lies or commits adultery—and all of these things are sins. No man is a sinner because he does these things; he does these things because he is a sinner. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. What is wrong with man is not primarily what he does but what he is, because we do what we do because we are what we are.

B. A Man Is a Sinner Because of What He Does

So man is, first of all, a sinner because of what he is. But, secondly, man is a sinner because of what he does. Some people who say, "I don't like that doctrine of Adam causing me to be a sinner. I didn't vote for Adam." Let me tell you something. If you go to hell, you won't go to hell for Adam's sin; you'll go to hell for yours. Do you understand what I'm talking about? Is there anybody in here who would have the audacity or the nerve to stand up and say he's not sinned? I hope not, for the Bible says in Romans 3, verse 23, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) Anytime you've told a lie, you've sinned. Anytime you've had lust in your heart, you've sinned. Anytime you've had hate in your heart, you have sinned.

Now, why is that sin? That sin is there because of the basic problem in your heart. If you've ever seen a wormhole in an apple, don't be afraid to eat the apple because it may have a worm in it. That hole did not let the worm in; it let the worm out. I want you to understand this. How do worms get into apples? They do not bore into apples; they are born into apples. You say, "Well, how could a worm be born in an apple?" The insect lays the egg in the apple blossom, and when the apple is formed, it is formed with the worm on the inside. The worm does not eat his way in; he eats his way out. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "Out of the heart of man proceed thefts, covetousness, adultery, and these things." (Matthew 15:19) You see, it's not the worm going in; it's the worm coming out. All of these things proceed from without.

C. A Man Is a Sinner Because of What He Has Done

So, first of all, a man is a sinner because of what he is: he's born into sin. But, secondly, a man is a sinner because of what he does: he has sinned. No one here would stand up and say, "I've not sinned." But listen, my dear friend. This verse of Scripture doesn't tell us that a man is a sinner because of what he is; nor does this verse of Scripture tell us a man is a sinner because of what he has done; this verse of Scripture tells us that a man is a sinner because of what he has not done. Now, pay attention. This is the kind of sin that nobody understands apart from the Holy Spirit. There are a lot of people who would nod their head and agree with the first two points, but very few people will understand this last point of what the real nature of sin is until the Holy Spirit of God convicts you. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit of God has come to convince men of sin, because

they believe not. The worst sin—the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin, the sin of all other sins, the sin tonight that will damn your soul and send you to hell if you're lost—is the sin of unbelief. The other sins have been paid for by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross; but there is one sin, dear friend, unless you deal with that, I can promise you, you will die and go to hell. It is the sin of unbelief.

And that brings something up very interesting, because some people say, "Well, you know, I just don't understand you preachers. You say we told a lie. Yes, I've told a lie. You say e have stolen. Yes, I took a nickel off mother's dresser, but I don't believe God's going to send me to hell for that. I don't believe God's going to send me to hell just because I had a lustful thought. I don't believe God's going to send me to hell just because I told a lie. That would be like putting a man in the penitentiary for life because he stole a loaf of bread. Yes, it's wrong to do it, but the punishment is not equal with the crime, and no God of love could let a man perish in hell forever just because he told a lie or just because he stole something." Dear friend, let me tell you the sin that will damn you. It is not that lying. It is not that stealing. It is unbelief. Unbelief is the great sin.

You say, "What's so great about unbelief?" Do you know what unbelief says to God? Unbelief is a clinched fist in the face of God. And that, dear friend, is high treason against heaven's King—and that's a crime worthy of death. The Bible says in John chapter 3—Jesus speaking—"*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed.*" (John 3:18) That's what the Holy Spirit of God is coming to tell.

You say, "Well, I can't help it if I don't believe. I mean, you can't make a guy believe. I've got intellectual problems." No, you don't. You've got sin problems. Unbelief never comes out of the head; unbelief comes out of the heart. The Bible says, "*Take heed...lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.*" (Hebrews 3:12) Unbelief always comes out of the head. It may show up out of the heart. It may show up in the head. It may show up as an intellectual problem. But, first of all, that unbelief starts in the heart. When God made you, God gave you the capacity to believe in Him. God gave you the capacity to trust Him. God gave you an inclination to trust Him. Christ is that "*Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*" (John 1:9) And, dear friend, you have to sin against that Light in order not to believe, and this is a clinched fist in the face of God.

Did you know that unbelief is the sin out of which all other sins grow? Why does a man tell a lie? Because he can't trust God to get him out of a pickle. Why does a man steal? Because he can't trust God to meet his needs. Listen. The mother sin—the parent sin, the sin of all sins, the sin that will damn you and condemn you and send you to hell—is refusing Jesus Christ. There is no greater sin. "The Holy Spirit of God is come to convince the world of sin because they believe not." "*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)

Understand this. Rick said that he was convicted here and has a record. All right, a courtroom can convict you of crimes. Your conscience can convict you that you’ve done wrong. But only the Holy Spirit of God can convict you of sin. And He will convict you of sin if you’ll allow Him to do that. The Holy Spirit of God will speak to your heart and tell you that you need the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that’s the first thing in this passage of Scripture: the basic problem of the sinner is what? Unbelief. So it doesn’t matter if you live in a fine home or not—if you have not believed on Jesus Christ, you have trampled beneath your feet the precious blood of Jesus Christ; (Hebrews 10:29) you are guilty of the one sin that is worthy of eternal hell, and that is to refuse the very Son of God.

II. The Blood-Bought Provision of the Savior

The second thing I want you to see that the Holy Spirit of God has come to convince you of: not only the basic problem of the sinner, but the blood-bought provision of the Savior. Now, notice again in verse 10, the Holy Spirit is coming to tell you *“of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” (John 16:10)*

Now, what did Jesus mean by this? Well, you see, the world is ignorant of righteousness, also. The world thinks a man is a sinner merely because of what he does. The world thinks, “Well, if a man is a sinner merely because of what he does, then if he’ll quit doing that, he will become righteous.” How many people want to turn over a new leaf and say, “Now, look what a good boy I am!” He quits beating his wife to so show how honorable he is.

Now, look, folks. Reformation never saved anybody. *You see, you shoot a dog, a rabid dog, or kill that dog, not for what he’s done, but for what he’s capable of doing. You can put a log in the sawmill, and you cut off this side, and that side, and this side, and that side, and that log is perfectly straight—but inside, the heart is crooked. Suppose there’s a man here that has a difficulty with alcohol and he quits drinking. What does that mean? Unless he’s saved, he’ll go to hell sober—that’s all it means.* You see, dear friend, he has to be born again.

Jesus told Nicodemus, a man morally better than any man, woman, boy, or girl in this building tonight, “Except you be born again, you shall not enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) A man has to be born again. The only righteousness that you have is from God—if you have righteousness at all. God spoke about the Jews so long ago, and this is what God said about them: *“They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” (Romans 10:3)* Many of you think you’re going to heaven

because you live good lives and are a moral person. But, dear friend, the Holy Spirit of God is coming to show you that your only hope of heaven, your only hope of righteousness, is Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, *“Of righteousness, because I go to my Father.”* (John 16:10) What does that mean? It means this: that Jesus came, suffered, bled, and died, and hung on Calvary’s cross, and with His blood, Jesus Christ paid your sin debt. Then Jesus ascended to the Father. He went to that temple in heaven. He went into that Holy of Holies, and He took His own blood, and He sprinkled His blood upon the Mercy Seat. And that shed blood of Jesus Christ there in heaven is your only hope of heaven. I want to tell you something, friend. Jesus Christ is not a good way to heaven; and Jesus Christ is not the best way to heaven; Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. The only righteousness you can have is the righteousness that Jesus Christ will give you when you believe on Jesus Christ. It is imputed righteousness. He imputes that righteousness to you, and you have no righteousness apart from Jesus Christ.

Do you know what God says about your righteousness—your so-called “righteousness”? God says that righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight. (Isaiah 64:6) And that word *“filthy rags”* is a word that meant the bandage that wraps the leper’s sore; the vile, loathsome, putrefying bandage. God says, “You see that filthy rag? That’s what I think of your righteousness.”

I think of Eddie Martin, a wonderful evangelist friend of mine. He was preaching at a crusade one time and he gave the invitation. And a woman came forward, and he was going to pray with her and lead her to Christ. He said, “Would you pray after me?” She said, “I want to be saved.” He said, “Wonderful, pray after me. Dear God...” She said, “Dear God...” “I am a sinner...” She didn’t say anything. He thought she didn’t hear him, so he said, “Lady, repeat after me. Dear God...” She said, “Dear God...” “I am a sinner...” She didn’t say anything. He said, “Madam, don’t you want to be saved?” She said, “Yes.” He said, “Well, pray this prayer after me: Dear God, I am a sinner...” She said, “I’m not a sinner.” He said, “Lady, the Bible says, *‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’*” (Romans 3:23) She said, “Well, if I’m a sinner, I’m a good sinner.” He said, “Madam, there are no good sinners. I think you ought to go back to your seat.” And then the Spirit of God taught her what I’m trying to teach you tonight. And the Spirit of God showed her wickedness, and the mascara started to flow, and she came back to this evangelist and she said, “Pray for me. I need to be saved. I am a sinner.” And he led her to Jesus Christ.

Oh, if we could only see, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” Oh, listen to me. I must have said this a hundred times, but I want to say it one more time tonight. Listen to me. Those of you who are church members, and those of you who sing in the choir, and those of you who take up the offering, and those of you who give

your money to good things, and you think this is going to get you to heaven—listen to me—listen to me. I beg you, listen to me. *The worst form of badness is human goodness, when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.* You may agree with this intellectually, but I pray God the Holy Spirit will show you tonight that the only righteousness that you can ever hope to have is in an ascended Savior, who sacrificed His blood.

The basic problem of the sinner is unbelief. The blood-bought provision of the Savior is salvation through His shed blood. Listen. It's reasonable. If a man can be saved any other way apart from Jesus Christ, do you believe that God would have let Jesus die on that cross? I mean, do you think that God would have let His Son Jesus die in agony and blood had there been some other way for men to be saved? I tell you, I wouldn't want to meet that kind of God in a dark alley—a God who would allow His Son to die on the cross when there was some other way to be saved. Jesus is not a good way to heaven—I've said that before; He's not the best way to heaven; friend, He is the only way to heaven. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6)

You say, "You're one of those narrow-minded people who think only Baptists are going to heaven." Folks, I'm more narrow-minded than that: I don't think a lot of Baptists are going to make it. But I'm going to tell you who is going to heaven: Methodists and Presbyterians and Episcopalians and Baptists, or anything else you can name who have trusted Christ as their personal Savior—people who have repented of their sin, and people who have said, "My basic sin is not what I am, not what I've done, but because I have refused the Son of God." And then there are people who have said, "O dear God, I believe that my only hope of salvation is in what Jesus did when He died for my sin, when He was raised by the power of God, when He went into that temple in heaven, and there upon that Mercy Seat sprinkled His blood of righteousness, because I go to my Father."

Now, let me tell you what Jesus did, my dear friend, when He died for you.

A. He Changed What I Am

Remember I said you were a sinner because of what you are? Friend, when Jesus died for you, He died to change what you are. Now you're not just looking at a guy that cleaned up his life when you look at Adrian Rogers or Rick Stanley or Bob Sorrell; you're looking at a new creature. *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."* (2 Corinthians 5:17) I have become a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) Christians are not just nice people; they are new creatures. They have been born again.

B. He Forgave What I Did

Number one: He changed what I am. Number two: He forgave what I did—every blur,

every blot, ever blemish, every stain, anything that I have ever done has been washed whiter than snow, because Jesus ascended to the glory and sprinkled His blood there. For the Bible says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin”*; (1 John 1:7) and, *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18) And I want to tell you tonight, you may be a boy or girl who has lost your moral purity and committed fornication; you may be a married man or woman—you’ve committed adultery; you may have been somebody experimenting with drugs; you may have been dishonest—but I want to tell you, when Jesus Christ saves you, He forgives you. He buries those sins in the depths of the sea. And Bertha Smith says, “He posts a ‘No Fishing’ sign.” Listen. *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from [you].”* (Psalm 103:12) And a prostitute who has been saved is an arch-virgin in the sight of Jesus Christ. She’s not patched up. She’s not made over. She is made new by the blood of Jesus Christ.

C. He Provides What I Need

Listen, dear friend. When He ascended to the Father, that changes, number one, what you are. Number two: He forgives what you’ve done. But I’ll tell you something else it does. Dear friend, not only does it change what you are, and forgive what you’ve done; it provides what you need. Do you know what you need? You need righteousness. And the Bible says, *“Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.”* (Psalm 32:2) But God imputes righteousness. You say, “What does *impute* mean?” It means “charge.” When you go down to Goldsmith’s to buy something tomorrow, or whatever department store you go to, don’t say, “Charge it”; say, “Impute it.” That ought to freak them out a little bit; they won’t know what that means, and then you can witness to them. Now, “just impute it” means to “put it on my account.” When you got saved, God put the righteousness of Jesus Christ on your account.

Do you know who I am tonight? I am the righteousness of God in Christ. When God sees me, He doesn’t just see me forgiven; He sees me righteous. Now there’s a difference between me and Adam before Adam sinned. Before Adam sinned, he was only innocent; I am righteous. Do you see the difference? Listen, friend. *I would rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel.* I have something that Adam doesn’t have: I have the righteousness of God imputed to me. And, hallelujah, I don’t understand it, but I can rejoice in it.

Listen, friend. He changed what I was and gave me a new nature. I’m a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) He forgave what I have done, and every sin is washed away; and then He provided what I need. Mercy is God not giving me what I deserve, but grace is God giving me what I don’t deserve. I don’t deserve that righteousness, but

thank God I have it. I pray God the Holy Spirit will show you that tonight.

III. The Broken Power of Satan

Now there's a third thing that the Holy Spirit will show you: Not only will He show you the basic problem of the sinner; not only will He show you the blood-bought salvation of the Savior; but the third thing He will show you is the broken power of Satan. Satan has ruled this world with a high hand. Satan has been called "the god of this age." (2 Corinthians 4:4) But Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit has come, He will convict you "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:11) Who is the prince of this world? The devil.

Now he doesn't say, "The prince of this world *will be* judged"; He says, "*The prince of this world is judged.*" That, ladies and gentlemen, is in the perfect tense; and what he means by that is that Satan is already a judged and a sentenced criminal. Judgment has passed upon Satan. When Jesus Christ went to the cross, Jesus Christ, facing that cross, said this: "Now is the judgment of this world: now is the prince of this world cast out." (John 12:31) And when Satan thought that he was defeating Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, in seeming defeat, cast out the devil, destroyed the works of the devil, broke the back of the devil, judged the devil. And I want to tell you, dear friend, if you are following the devil or living in sin, listen to me, and listen to well: *Sin can't win, and God can't fail.* It's already over. If you're following Satan, you're following a loser. And if you think you can get away with your sin, you can't, because the Bible says that hell was "*prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matthew 25:41)—those who follow him, whether fallen angels or whether followers here. That's the devil's destiny, and judgment has already passed. *Satan rules a doomed domain. Satan sails a sinking ship.*

What God is saying is that love is stronger than hate. Truth is stronger than error. Righteousness is stronger than sin. *Sin can't win. God can't fail. God must prevail.* I am telling you, ladies and gentlemen, that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing worth belonging to, and the cause of Jesus Christ is the winning cause. Woodrow Wilson said, "I'd rather temporarily fail with a cause which must ultimately succeed than to temporarily succeed with a cause which must ultimately fail."

Thank God, hallelujah, that the judgment of this world is past, and Satan's power is broken. That means that when he tells me to do something, I don't have to obey him any more. Before I was saved, I walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the course of this age. I was Satan's slave. But now I have been made free by the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan's power of dominion and Satan's power of deception and Satan's power of death is broken. It is broken! Hallelujah! And I now can be free. And not only forgiven, but I can live as I ought to live, because Satan has no more dominion on me.

Conclusion

Oh, the Holy Spirit of God is the One who must teach you that tonight. I can preach it, but—would you listen to me? Listen—Jesus said when the Holy Spirit of God has come, He'll tell you three things: The basic problem of the sinner is unbelief. The blood-bought provision of the Savior is righteousness. And the broken power of Satan is accomplished. It is over; it is finished; the battle is over, and Jesus has won. Amen? Jesus has won.

Now the only question you have is whether or not you're going to get in on that victory, whether or not you're going to receive him. Would to God that you would say, "I have a problem, not because of what I am, and not because of what I've done, but because of what I have not done. I have not received Jesus Christ. I have a need. There's nothing I can do to save myself. But Jesus died for me, and Jesus has provided a righteousness. Tonight, I'm going to lay hold of that righteousness, and the power of Satan will be broken forever in my life."

A lady got saved. Her friend, who was an infidel, mocked her. She was just a domestic woman who cleaned houses for a living. He was very educated. He thought he could put her down. He said, "Betty, tell me what's it like being saved. Explain it to me." She said, "Well, I don't think I can explain it where it will satisfy you, but I'll tell you what it means to me: I'm standing in Jesus's shoes, and He is standing in mine." A theologian couldn't have said it better: "He took my sin, and, bless God, I have taken His righteousness."

Years ago, there was a farmer who was walking home up in Pennsylvania. He was walking along the railroad track. He stumbled and he looked down, and he saw that a great section of the rail had been bowed out. He knew that those express trains from New York to Philadelphia would be coming along. This farmer had a lantern in his hand, and he dropped his packages. He knew there was going to be a wreck unless he could stop the train. Already he could feel the roadbed of that train as it began to vibrate and quiver. This farmer began to run in the direction of the oncoming train. And the sound got louder and louder. The farmer, in his excitement, tripped and fell. He broke his lantern, and the light went out. He continued to run, now with his hands bleeding, in the direction of that train. The light was coming, switching back and forth, back and forth. The train was thundering down. This farmer waited to the last moment, stepped aside, took his lantern, and hurled it right into the face of the engineer. The engineer did not know what was happening, but figured something bad must be wrong, and he applied the brakes. The train was stopped.

They gave that farmer the Carnegie Medal for his braveness and valor. I believe tonight that the Holy Spirit of God has brought you here to this crusade. I believe that God the Holy Spirit has said, "Adrian, Adrian, fling it in their face! Tell them to receive

Jesus! Tell them to be saved!"

If I could go out there and sit where you are sitting tonight; if I could get up out of those stands tonight and walk down this aisle tonight to Jesus for you, I would. But I cannot. There's no one who can do it but you. Now I am telling you that God the Holy Spirit has brought you here tonight to tell you that your basic problem is unbelief, that your only hope of righteousness is Jesus Christ, and that the power of sin and Satan can be broken—will be broken—when you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, for "the prince of this world has been judged." (John 16:11)

I want every head bowed. I want every eye closed in this place tonight—every one. I want us to get very, very quiet tonight. This is the most important thing in the entire crusade. Today, the Holy Spirit of God is lifting up the cross of Calvary. **Like that farmer threw out that light, He is throwing out Calvary to us, in front of us. Would to God that you could see it and receive it!** Would you like to be saved? I'm going to ask, please, that no one move, no one stir around, unless it is an emergency. I wonder how many here tonight would say, "Brother Rogers, I am absolutely certain that if I died tonight, I would go straight to heaven. I have repented of my sin. I have trusted Christ as my personal Savior. God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, and I have received Christ. I have confessed Him. His blood-bought righteousness is my righteousness. I know if I died right now, I'd go to heaven." May I see your hand? Lift it up. Thank you—thank you—everyone. Of course, that's many, but not all of us.

Those of you who did not lift your hand, I want to thank you tonight for being honest. Now I want to pray for those of you who would like to know Jesus, so I'm going to ask a second question; I'm going to ask how many in this building tonight see your need of Jesus, and in your heart there's a desire to know Jesus Christ. Now I want to make it very clear: I'm not talking to you about being a Methodist, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, or anything else; I'm talking to you about knowing Jesus Christ. I wonder how many here tonight would say, "Brother Rogers, I do want to know that I am saved. I'd like to have the assurance that my sin is forgiven. I would love to know that heaven is my home. I am concerned about the eternal destiny of my soul. And in the prayer that you're about to pray, I want you to remember me in prayer."

Now in a moment, I'm going to ask you to lift your hand for prayer. But let me tell you this: I will not embarrass you; I will not point you out in any way whatsoever; but I will sincerely pray for you. If you would say tonight, "I'm not certain that I'm saved; I need to be saved; I want you to pray for me," would you just slip up your hand? All over this building! Yes, God bless you. Yes, God bless you. Others up in the balcony, up here in the risers, lift your hand, and then take it down: "I'm not saved, but I need to be saved."

I wonder how many would say to me, "Pastor, I am saved. But my heart is condemning me tonight—this music, this sermon. I know that I have not been living for

Jesus as I ought to live for Him. My heart has been cold and indifferent toward the things of God. And while I'm a believer, I know tonight I need personal revival in my heart and in my life." May I see your hand? Would you just slip it up? God bless you. Many of you. Thank you.

Now I wonder how many of you tonight would say, "Pastor, I'm saved, but I'm looking for a church home. Would you pray with me that I might know and do God's will about a church home, a place to worship?" Let me see your hand. Hold it up high. You're looking for a church home, some of you. God bless you.

Now I want us to pray. And if you're sitting with a friend who knows Jesus, or a friend who doesn't know Jesus, I wonder if you could slip out and take them by the hand, especially if you're a husband and wife or members of the same family. Just take your loved one by the hand as we pray. And I want those of you who know how to pray—pray with me now for those who need Christ.

Father, in the name of Jesus and in the power of that name, I pray tonight for these who are not saved that tonight they will say an everlasting yes to Jesus. Lord God, you've seen these hands. These people have said, "I'm not certain that I'm saved." They need to be saved. Jesus, save them tonight. Then, Lord God, you've seen these who've said, "I'm saved, but I'm not walking in fellowship with God, and I've been convicted of that tonight," and I pray, O God, in the name of Jesus, that you would cause them tonight to make a brand new, fresh commitment to Jesus Christ. And, Lord, for those who are seeking a church home, give them leadership, I pray. Spirit of the living God, do your work in this invitation. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

God's Cure for Man's Ignorance

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 19, 1980

Main Scripture Text: John 16:7–11

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Severity of Sin
 - A. Man Is a Sinner Because of What He Is
 - B. What Is a Sinner Because of What He Has Done
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- II. The Sufficiency of Christ
- III. The Surety of Judgment

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to John the sixteenth chapter; we begin reading in verse 7. As I've already told the television audience, our subject for today is "God's Cure for Man's Ignorance." Now, there are certain things that no seminary, no college, no grade school, and no preacher can teach you. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you three tremendous truths that I'm going to be talking about today. Now, I can preach about them, and I can tell you about them; and, intellectually, you may perceive them, but you will never really understand these three truths until God the Holy Spirit turns the light on in your soul—no matter how much education you have.

Remember last week we talked about the new birth and Nicodemus? And Jesus, when He told Nicodemus certain spiritual truths, "*said unto him, Art thou a master [in] Israel, and knowest not these things?*" (John 3:10) Nicodemus, that means, was a very erudite, educated man. He was a master in Israel. He had his "MI" degree, but he didn't have his "BA" degree: he'd never been born again. And, Jesus talked to him about being born again and receiving new life. And, there were certain things that Nicodemus could only understand as God the Holy Spirit turned the light on in his soul. Now, therefore, I want to talk to you about three tremendous truths that are God's cure for man's ignorance.

Now, look in verse 7: Jesus said, "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you*"—the Paraclete, the One called alongside of us. It's another name for the Holy Spirit—"*the [Holy Spirit] will not come unto youv but if I depart, I will send him*"—the Holy Spirit—

“unto you. And when he”—the Holy Spirit—“is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:7–8) Now, look at that word *reprove*. What does it literally mean—“he will reprove”? Well, some translators give this word: “He will *convict* the world of sin, and of righteousness, and judgment.” Others use the word “He will *convince* the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.” And actually, as I’ve studied it and tried to find out which translation is best, I like all three, and I believe that there’s no one English word that can inculcate exactly what Jesus is saying. Let’s just put it this way: when God the Holy Spirit is come, He will reprove, convict, and convince the world of three great things. What are they? Look at them again: “*of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*” (John 16:8) The only way that you’ll ever understand these things is for God the Holy Spirit to teach them to you.

Now, when He teaches, He’s going to use His preacher. He’s going to use me today. It doesn’t mean that He’s going to do it without us; it just means that we cannot do it without Him. You see, 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) So, it’s not merely my voice this morning, but it’s also the impact of the Holy Spirit today speaking through me that wants to unlock these tremendous truths in your heart and in your mind. I was with a preacher for lunch yesterday, and he said, “Adrian, what are you going to preach tomorrow?” And, I said, “Well, I’m going to preach about three things you can’t learn in school,” and Joyce said, “Reading, writing, and arithmetic?” “No,” I said. “I’m going to talk to you about sin, and righteousness, and judgment.” Now, actually, we’re going to be talking about, therefore, the severity of sin. We’re going to be talking about the sufficiency of Christ and the certainty of judgment. That’s our outline today.

I. The Severity of Sin

First of all, the severity of sin. “The Holy Spirit is come to convince the world of sin”—(John 16:8) verse 8. Now, man is a sinner for three basic reasons: first of all, man is a sinner because of what he is; secondly, man is a sinner because of what he has done; and thirdly, man is a sinner because of what he has not done. Now, let’s think about that.

A. Man Is a Sinner Because of What He Is

Man is a sinner, first of all, because of what he is. The Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3 that he’s a sinner by nature. Ephesians 2:3—Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3—says, “[*We are*] by [*wrath*]”—we are “by nature,” rather—“*the children of wrath.*” (Ephesians 2:3) Well, where did we get that nature? Where did we get that old

sinful nature? We got it from Adam. Romans chapter 5, verse 19: *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”* (Romans 5:19) When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, when he fell, the entire race fell with him. And, you were not created in the image of God; you came into this world in the image of Adam. That is, you came into this world with a sinful nature.

Now, the world doesn’t understand this. The world thinks that a man is a sinner because he tells lies, a man is a sinner because he cheats, a man is a sinner because he steals, a man is a sinner because he rapes, a man is a sinner because he commits adultery, a man is a sinner because he blasphemes. The Bible doesn’t teach that; the Bible teaches just the opposite. A man is not a sinner because he does those things; he does those things because he is a sinner. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he’s a liar. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he’s a thief. The problem, dear friend, is the nature. *“[We are] by nature the children of wrath.”* (Ephesians 2:3)

I was doing some reading the other day, and I made an amazing discovery. Have you ever wondered how a worm gets into an apple? You remember that old story: the only thing worse than finding a worm in an apple is finding half a worm, you know. Have you ever wondered how the worm gets into the apple? Perhaps you think that the worm starts on the outside and bores his way into that apple, but he doesn’t. The worm starts on the inside and bores his way out. You say, “Wait a minute. How did he get in there?” The insect comes and lays his egg in the apple blossom; and then, when the apple is formed, that egg is in the heart of the apple. And, it hatches, and that lava eats its way out. And, that’s exactly what happens to us, dear friend: there is sin in the heart; it is born in the heart, and it comes to the surface. *“And out of the thoughts and out of the hearts of man proceed lying, and thefts, and adultery.”* (Matthew 15:19) All of these things are in the inside before they come to the outside.

And, a man is a sinner—a man is a sinner—not primarily for what he has done, but for what he is. Here’s a dog coming down the street, and he’s foaming at the mouth and acting in a maniacal way. And, someone takes the dog and incarcerates the dog—or perhaps shoots the dog because the dog is rabid. The dog hasn’t bitten anyone yet. Why is he locked up? Why is he killed? Not for what he has done but what he is capable of doing. If we could only learn that we have a sin nature, and it is not primarily what we have done that condemns us; it is what we are. *We are sinners by nature. “[We are] by nature the children of wrath.”* (Ephesians 2:3)

And, the world doesn’t understand this. The world doesn’t understand that it—our thought life—is going to be held accountable before God. But, Jesus said, *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his*

heart.” (Matthew 5:28) The Bible says that when you have hate toward someone, God wrote it down in His book as murder. (1 John 3:15) As a matter of fact, you can read there in Genesis chapter 6 where God destroyed an entire civilization because of the *“[imagination] of [their] thoughts of [their hearts were] evil continually.”* (Genesis 6:5) Oh, certainly, they were evil deeds, but it first of all started on the inside.

The Apostle Paul was a self-righteous man. He was doing fine. You know, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was a learned man and a self-righteous, punctiliar sort of a fellow. He kept all of the commandments, so he thought, until one day he was checking up: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* (Exodus 20:3) Oh, I wouldn’t do that. No siree! *‘Thou shalt not make...any graven image.’* (Exodus 20:4) No, sir. And, God... You don’t take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11) God, I’ve never done that. *‘Remember the sabbath day.’* (Exodus 20:8) I always do. *‘Honour [your] father and [your] mother.’* (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) Yes siree! I do that. *‘Don’t kill.’* (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17) No, I wouldn’t do that. *‘Don’t steal.’* (Exodus 20:15) Uh-huh. *‘Don’t commit adultery.’* (Exodus 20:14) No, sir.” But then, he said, “I came to one commandment, and it just wiped me out.” He said, “It slew me.” Do you know what the commandment was? *“Thou shalt not covet.”* (Exodus 20:17) You see, Paul, perhaps, had never told a lie, but he couldn’t say he never wanted to. Paul had not stolen anything, but he couldn’t say he’d never wanted to. Paul had not committed adultery, but he could not say that he had never wanted to. You see, *covet* means “illicit desire.” And, God got not to what Paul was doing but to what Paul was—right to the heart of Paul. And, Paul said, “When I saw that commandment, ‘Thou shalt not covet,’ God laid bare my heart, and it literally slew me.” (Romans 7:7) That is, “The life went out of me, and I saw my need of the Lord.” You see, a man is a sinner, first of all, for what he is.

B. What Is a Sinner Because of What He Has Done

Now, someone says, “Well, I just don’t like the idea of me being a sinner because of Adam. I don’t see how one man can act on behalf of us all. I refuse to let Adam act for me.” Well, I want to ask you another question: Will you refuse, therefore, to let Jesus act for you? You see, when you say, “I’m not going to let one man act on my behalf,” you’ve just left yourself out of the atonement. I want you to listen again to Romans chapter 5 and verse 18: *“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”* (Romans 5:18) Friend, I’m glad to take Adam’s sin if I can take Jesus’s righteousness, amen? I am glad that Jesus—one man—died on that cross, and through His death on the cross He dealt with what I am: a sinner by nature. But, you

see, man is not only a sinner for what he is, but he's also a sinner because of what he has done.

Is there anybody here who's not told a lie? Is there anybody here who's not been proud? Is there anybody here who's not been dishonest? Is there anybody here who has not stolen something that did not belong to him, even if it were not a...even if it were a nickel off your mother's dresser, or a toy out of the neighbor's yard, or an answer in school when you looked over on somebody else's page? Is there anybody here who's not been disobedient to his parents? Is there anybody here who's not sinned in some way? Of course not, for the Bible says in Romans 3, verse 23: *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) Amen. Just bow your head and say, "Amen. That's me—that's me. I'm guilty." *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) And, the Bible says, *"[If we] keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [we're] guilty of all."* (James 2:10) You see, man is a sinner—man is a sinner—number one, because of what he is. Number two: He is a sinner because of what he has done, but he does what he does because he is what he is.

C. Man Is a Sinner Because of What He Has Not Done

But, number three: Man is a sinner because of what he has not done. Why did God make you, anyway? Why did God create you? To know Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and to bring Him glory. And, even if you never did anything wrong negatively—which you have—still, if you fail to serve the Lord with your whole heart, you, too, are a sinner, for the Bible says in James 4, verse 17: *"to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* (James 4:17) You see, we're sinners not only for what we are and what we've done, but for what we have not done.

Suppose there's a man overseas who's working for a particular company—at least, he's been hired by that company, by that firm. And, he's over there, and they send him a check every month. Let's say they send him a check every month for five thousand dollars, and he gets that check—every month he gets that check. And, they also take care of his living expenses, give him a place to live, because he's to represent the American firm overseas. But, while he's overseas drawing that money and living in that villa that they have prepared for him, he's working for the competition. What would you think of a man like that who is receiving a check from one company and serving another company? That's exactly what every unsaved man, boy, and girl does on the face of this earth. He breathes God's air. He walks on God's green earth. He receives the life and the strength that God gives him. But, rather than using that energy to serve God, he's serving the competition, and, *"therefore"*—the Bible says—*"to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is [a] sin"* (James 4:17)—"it is sin," rather.

So, but, I want you to see what our verse says. Look at our verse. The Bible says in verse 8 that the Holy Spirit is come to convict men of sin not because of what they are, or not even because of what they've done, or not even really because of what they have not done, so far as works are concerned, but look at it: *"he is come [to convince]"*—to convince, to convict, and reprove—*"[men] of sin...because they believe not on me."* (John 16:8–9)

Now, draw up your chairs, and listen very carefully. This is something really only the Holy Spirit can tell us, but He wants to tell you through me: the greatest sin in the world is refusing to believe in Jesus Christ. "Aw," you say, "I know things worse than that. Murder's worse than that. Adultery is worse than that. Rape is worse than that. Child abuse is worse than that." No, it is not. There is no greater sin than to refuse to believe in Jesus Christ. And, when the Holy Spirit is come into the world, He convicts men of sin not because they lie, murder, rape, steal, or kill, but because they believe not.

"Well," you say, *"That doesn't seem like such a bad sin to me."* Now, suppose we have over here a vile assortment of garbage, and dung, and rottenness, and carrion, and filth, and stench, and the maggots are working in it—a terrible, horrible thing reeking with odor. We would look at that, and we'd say, "That's vile. That's terrible." But, suppose I had over here just a crystal-clear drop of tasteless, odorless deadly poison. Which is worse? That crystal-clear drop of deadly poison. Now, we look at the vile sins, and we say, "That's worse." But, we don't understand the deadly sin of failing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is that such a great sin? You see, unbelief is a clenched fist in the face of God. Unbelief is never an intellectual thing; it is always a moral thing. Unbelief never comes out of the head; it always come out of the heart. That's the reason the Bible says, *"[Beware] lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."* (Hebrews 3:12) Unbelief comes out of the heart, not out of the head. It is not weakness; it is wickedness. It is a clenched fist in the face of God. That helps us to understand some things.

Someone says, "Now, wait a minute. I believe it's wrong to tell a lie, surely, but God's not going to let me burn in hell forever just because I told a lie," or, "God's not going to let me go to hell forever just because I disobeyed my parents. That would be like putting a man in a penitentiary for life for running a red light, or that would be like putting a man in the electric chair for stealing a loaf of bread. The punishment doesn't fit the crime." Well, dear friend, you don't go to hell now because you lie, because you steal, or because you run red lights. There is no greater sin than to refuse to bow the knee to Almighty God. And, the way you do that, dear friend, is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and the way you receive Christ as your personal Savior is to believe on Him. And so, when the Holy Spirit is come into the world, *"He is come [into*

the world to convince men] of sin...because they believe not.” (John 16:8–9) It is the greatest sin, and, therefore, it carries the greatest punishment. *“He that believeth on him is not condemned”*—the Bible says—*“but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed.”* (John 3:18)

Now, you say, “I don’t think I agree with that.” Well, I told you only the Holy Spirit could teach you that. You may even understand what I’m saying intellectually. Listen to me: a court may convict you of crimes; your conscience may convict you of wrongdoing, but only the Holy Spirit can convict you of sin, when you understand what the great sin is. You see, unbelief is the greatest insult you can give to God—to refuse His Son. The Bible says, *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.”* (1 John 5:10) There’s no greater sin than trampling under your feet the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ—there is no greater sin.

And, I want to say unbelief is the parent sin: it is the mother sin, the father sin—the sin out of which all other sins grow. Why does a person steal? Because he can’t trust God for his needs. Why does a person tell lies? Because he can’t trust God to make the truth work out. Why does a person take revenge? Because he cannot trust God, who says, *“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”* (Romans 12:19) There is no sin in your life but what somehow is rooted back into unbelief. And so, when the Holy Spirit is come into the world, He is come into the world to convince men of sin—not because of what they are, what they’ve done, or what they have not done, but because they have refused Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Only the Holy Spirit can help you to see that.

II. The Sufficiency of Christ

But, I want to go on and say, secondly, not only does the Holy Spirit come to convince you of the severity of sin, but the Holy Spirit comes to convince you, alongside of that, of the sufficiency of Christ. Notice again in verse 8: *“And when he is come, he will [convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness.”* (John 16:8)

Now, I want to say that the world’s conception of righteousness is just as warped, and distorted, and out of sync as is the world’s conception of sin. The world thinks that sin is merely doing wrong; and so, when the world thinks that sin is merely doing wrong, what does the world think that righteousness is? The world thinks that righteousness is, therefore, doing good. And, the world has the idea that “if I can be a good boy, I’ll go to heaven.” I used to think that, and so did you. Everybody used to tell us when we were children there are two places you go after you die: heaven and the bad place. And, if you want to go to the good place, you’d better be good. And, we had an idea that God was like Santa Claus, making a list and checking it twice, going to find out who’s

naughty or nice. Isn't that right? And, we thought that somehow we were going to get to the Final Judgment, and God's going parade out all of our works; and they're going to weighed. And, if our good works outweigh our bad works, then we're righteous and we go to heaven. If our bad works outweigh our good works, then we're unrighteous and we go to hell. That is... See, the world doesn't understand what righteousness is; and so, the Holy Spirit is come into the world to convince men of righteousness. (John 16:8)

Do you know what Paul said about the Hebrew people of his day in Romans chapter 10, verse 3? *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* (Romans 10:3) Have you quit trying to be righteous by yourself, and have you submitted yourself to the righteousness of God? Do you think that your church membership can get you to heaven? Do you think your baptism can get you to heaven? Do you think your financial gifts can get you to heaven? Do you think that your good deeds can please God? Oh, how deceived you are! How ignorant of God's righteousness you are! The Bible says in Isaiah chapter 64 and verse 6 that *"all our [righteousness is] as filthy rags [in God's sight]."* (Isaiah 64:6) And, do you know what the figure of speech is there? The filthy rags spoken of is the vile bandage that has wrapped the leper's sore and is now discarded. Now, that's not what God says about your so-called sin; that's what God says about your so-called righteousness—the things that you're counting on. Oh, how ignorant the world is of what true righteousness is and where righteousness is found!

Now, what does the Holy Spirit teach us about righteousness? Well, look in verse 10: *"Of righteousness, because I"*—Jesus—*"go to my Father, and ye see me no more."* (John 16:10) Now, why does Jesus link righteousness with His ascension to the Father? Well, what did Jesus do when He ascended to the Father? He went into that Holy of Holies that is there in the Glory, and He sprinkled His shed blood there upon the Mercy Seat as a satisfaction and a propitiation for our sins. And, the Bible teaches that it is the ascended Christ in the Glory who is the One now who provides for our righteousness. Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3: it speaks of Christ, *"Who being [in] the brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of [God's] person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* (Hebrews 1:3) That's what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is saying, "I came to this earth. I suffered. I bled. I died. I was buried. I was raised from the dead. I have ascended into the Glory, and what I have done by my ascension is the capstone—the crowning event—that proves that I am the Son of God and it proves that you're justified." The Bible says in Romans chapter 1, verse 4 that Jesus Christ is *"declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead."*

(Romans 1:4) If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, if Jesus Christ is not ascended to the Father, I wouldn't give half a hallelujah for your hope of heaven. You see, He's *"[shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead."* (Romans 1:4)

Are you understanding what I'm saying? Righteousness is found nowhere else but in the risen, ascended Christ. All of your good works cannot save you. Do you realize that, if you could be saved by your good deeds, that Calvary was a colossal blunder and God made a bonehead play? You say, "Brother Rogers, don't be irreverent." I'm not. I'm saying if that's the way you think, you are irreverent. What I'm saying is this, dear friend: if you could be saved by being good and by doing good deeds, and if righteousness come by the works of the law, then Calvary was the world's biggest blunder. Listen to what Paul says in Galatians chapter 2, verse 21: he says, "Do I make void the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Galatians 2:21) The death of Christ on the cross was superfluous, it was useless, it was void, and null, and needless if you could be saved by being good. Then, God would say, "Just be good and be saved." But, my friend, I want to tell you, even God is helpless to save you apart from the death of Christ. Paul said, *"[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation."* (Romans 1:16) God is powerless to save anybody apart from the death of Christ on the cross. And, if righteousness come any other way than receiving the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as an atonement for sin, then Calvary was a colossal mistake and the blunder of the ages. But, so many people don't understand that, and they never will understand it until they see through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. He is come to convince the world, number one, of sin, because they believed not; number two, of righteousness, because Christ is the ascended Lord in the Glory.

III. The Surety of Judgment

Now, dear friend, I want to tell you the third thing that the Holy Spirit is come to convince men of—not only of sin (the severity of sin), not only of righteousness (the sufficiency of Christ), but He is also come to convince us, to convict us, and to reprove us of judgment (the surety of judgment). Look, if you will please, again in John chapter 16, and look in verse 10—excuse me, verse 9: "Of sin, because they believe not on me"—verse 10—*"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more"*—but now, look in verse 11—*"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."* (John 16:9–11)

Now, many times when people quote this verse—these three verses—they misquote them. They say something like this—and I've heard it frequently, and so will you, if you listen—that "the Holy Spirit is come to convince men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come." And, they mix two verses here. This verse doesn't say anything

about judgment to come. It says just the opposite. It says, “[*The Holy Spirit*] is come [to convince men]”—“to reprove men”—“of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...because the prince of this world is judged.” (John 16:8–11) The Judgment’s not coming; it’s already passed. The devil has already been judged. This is in the perfect tense. Who is the prince of this world? The devil. You say, “You mean, the devil’s already had his judgment day?” He has. When was the devil’s judgment day? When Christ died on the cross. You read there in the gospel of John, the twelfth chapter, the thirty-first verse: as Jesus Christ is ready to embrace that cross, Jesus Christ says, “*Now is the judgment of this world*”—He wasn’t looking to some far-off event—“*Now is the judgment of this world: now [is] the prince of this world...cast out.*” (John 12:31) Satan’s back was broken at Calvary. What Satan thought was going to be his greatest triumph was, indeed, his moment of defeat, and what seemed to be a defeat for the Lord Jesus Christ was His moment of mighty victory. Satan was judged at the cross. When Jesus Christ died and rose again, that proved once and for all that Satan cannot win.

Now, please get this in your heart. I’m preaching it, but the Holy Spirit is the One I’m trusting to lay it upon your heart. Are you paying attention? Listen to me: sin cannot win—it cannot. Satan cannot prevail. He is a condemned criminal; he is a vanquished rebel, and Christ has crushed the power of the enemy already. Don’t make the mistake of following a loser. Don’t get the idea that somehow there’s a colossal battle going on that’s being waged between Christ and the devil, and the outcome is still out there in the future, and we hope our side wins. Friend, we’ve already won. We won two thousand years ago when the Lord Jesus crushed the serpent’s head there at Calvary. And, I want to tell you that Satan rules over a doomed domain, and Satan sails a sinking ship. And, if you follow him, then you’re going to share his destiny, for the Bible tells us in Matthew chapter 25, verse 41 that hell was “*prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41)—his messengers, his followers. And, I want to tell you, if you’re not a follower of Jesus, you are a follower of Satan. You say, “Well, I don’t want to follow either one.” Well, you can’t be neutral. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12, verse 30: “*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*” (Matthew 12:30) Either you’re for Christ or you’re against Him. Either you’re a follower of Christ or you’re a follower of Satan, whether you know it wittingly or not. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, that if you’re a follower of Satan, the Judgment has already passed upon you.

You know what some people have the idea? You see, because they have a mixed idea of what sin is and a mixed idea of what righteousness is, they think that sin is doing good and they think that right—excuse me, they think that sin is doing bad; they think

that righteousness is doing good—so, therefore, they're going to live their life and then, one day, they're going to come to the Judgment and see how it all works out. Now, what Jesus and the Holy Spirit tell you is that sin is refusing to believe in Christ; righteousness is believing in Christ. And, you don't have to face the Judgment; it's already over—it's already over.

You say, "What do you mean by that, Brother Rogers?" Let me just put it this way: What does a man have to do to be lost? Nothing! Do you have to spit in the preacher's face? Do you have to burn a Bible? Do you have to blaspheme God? No. What does a man have to do to be lost? Nothing! He's lost already. *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already."* (John 3:18) You don't have to wait 'til the Judgment Day. The Judgment Day is just the working out of what has already happened when Jesus died on the cross. I want to tell you, dear friend, the watershed of the ages was Calvary, and either you're on the right side of that cross or you're on the wrong side of that cross. And, the devil has already been judged. He cannot win. He cannot—he cannot—conquer. He has been defeated, and there's no sense in following a loser.

I heard one time—read somewhere in some whimsical story—of a spider who tried to build his spider's web on the hand of the town clock. And, of course, he would spin his web, and those hands would just move. And, he kept doing his work over and over again, and it was always so futile. And, I want to tell you that the arms of God's clock move on to the sure destiny that belongs to the children of God and to the sure destiny that belongs to those who follow the devil.

Are you understanding what the Holy Spirit is come to convince you of, to convict you of, and reprove you of? Of sin, because you believe not; of righteousness, because Christ is our righteousness—the ascended Christ; and of judgment—not judgment to come, but judgment that has already passed, if you don't know the Lord Jesus. *"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)

Now, I want to say something again. What I'm telling you today I'm praying that the Holy Spirit is also telling you today so you'll understand it. But, there's a bright side to this judgment. Did you know that, since the Judgment is in the past, that my sins have already been judged, too, if I'm a Christian? And, the Bible says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation"*—no judgment—*"to [those who] are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) You know, in a court of law—in a court of law—the order is sin and judgment, but that isn't what our verse says. Look at our verse: our verse says, *"And when he is come, he will [convince] the world of sin...of righteousness, and...judgment."* (John 16:8) Aren't you glad that God put His righteousness between our sin and judgment? Aren't

you glad for that? Isn't that beautiful? Sin, righteousness, and judgment—that God's righteousness stands between me and judgment.

Conclusion

Do you know the only thing between some of you here tonight—or this afternoon, or this morning, or whenever it is—the only thing—Gary, I'm not the only one—the only thing between some here today and hell—are you paying attention?—the only thing is your heartbeat. That's all. Put your hand up there. Can you feel it? Man, where's mine? Thump, thump. That's all—that's all—there is between some who are listening to me and everlasting hell. Thank God, between you and hell there's a cross, and Christ is on it. Thank God, between me and hell there's an empty grave. Thank God, between me and hell there is an extended Christ. Thank God, between me and hell there is the righteousness of God in Christ. Oh, if you could only understand this—if only the Holy Spirit would help you to understand it.

Years ago, I read of a farmer who was walking along the railroad right-of-way—the Pennsylvania Railroad up in Pennsylvania. And, he was walking along, and he stumbled. And, he looked down, and a great portion of the railroad track had been bowed out and washed away. He knew that there were great trains that would be thundering along there before long. The express train from New York to Pennsylvania would be coming. And, as he listened, he could hear the thunder, the rumble, of this train off in the distance. This was back in the olden days when men carried kerosene lanterns, and the farmer had a kerosene lantern with him. He knew that there would be a tragedy if that train struck that part of the railroad. And so, he took his lighted lantern, and he started running in the direction to which the train was coming. He dropped his packages along the right-of-way, and he ran. He stumbled; he fell. He broke the lamp—the glass on his lantern—but he picked it up. The light was no longer burning, but he kept running; and he ran until finally he came face to face with that train bearing down upon him. Just at the last moment he stepped off the track, and took his lantern, and hurled it into the face of the engineer on that train. He caught his attention. The engineer figured surely something was wrong, and he applied the brakes; and that train stopped, and a tragedy was averted. They gave the farmer the Carnegie Medal of Honor. I'm trying to do something like that to you this morning. I'm trying to take the cross of Jesus Christ and hold it up before you and say, “Oh, for God's sake, pay attention. Listen, *‘though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be...white as snow; [and] though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’*” (Isaiah 1:18)

“[God the Holy Spirit] is come [into] the world [to convince you] of sin...of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not...Of righteousness,

because I go to my Father, and [you] see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world [has already been] judged.” (John 16:8–11)

Let's bow in prayer. Father in heaven, I just pray today that many in this building will be saved just by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, and help them to know that your righteousness is theirs for the receiving if they will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And for them, the judgment of their sins can be behind them. Thank you, Lord; thank you.

And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to pray this prayer in your heart if you want Jesus Christ to save you. And, those of you who are listening by television, you can pray the same prayer. Pray a prayer like this: “O God, I'm a sinner; and 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 only trust you. I do trust you, Jesus”—pray it right now, right now—“I do trust you, Jesus, right now. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me. Thank you for saving me, Jesus. I receive it by faith like a little child, and that settles it forever. Praise your holy name. Now, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to take a public stand for you. In your name I pray. Amen.”

God's Cure for Man's Ignorance

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 27, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 16:7–11

Sponsored by: Sponsor

*“And when he is come, he will reprove the world
of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

JOHN 16:8

Outline

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I. The Severity of Sin

II. The Sufficiency of the Savior

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Introduction

I want you to take God's sacred, precious, holy, infallible, inerrant Bible, please, and turn, if you will, to John 16. The gospel of John, chapter 16. We're going to begin our reading in verse 11. And I hope you brought a Bible with you today. If you did not, look in the pew rack in front of you and there will be a Bible there for you most likely. And find the gospel of John, and turn with me, please to chapter 16 and we'll begin reading in verse 7 through verse 11. Now these are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away—now the word *expedient* means that it is necessary, needless—for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

I want to speak to you on “God's Cure for Man's Ignorance.” Now, in spite of the fact that man worships at the shrine of his computers, in spite of the fact that man is now, orbiting out in outer space in a space shuttle, in spite of the fact that we have unlocked the secrets of the atom, in spite of the fact that we have put a man on the moon, in spite of the fact that we have conquered many of the terrible diseases, like polio and other things, in spite of all of that, the stunning mark of this day is ignorance when it comes to spiritual things. And you may be a professor with a PhD. Or you may be a doctor. You

may be a lawyer. You may be an economist. But there are three things that you will never know until God teaches them to you. There are three things that are not learned in school, and there are three things, really, that no preacher can tell you of and convince you of. I may tell you of them, but I cannot teach you of them. I may speak of them, but only the Holy Spirit of God can truly plant these things in your heart. And that's the reason I'm so dependent upon Him when I preach. And, please, dear Spirit of God, fill me now and anoint me and enable me to preach and communicate these truths because we are dependent upon Him. I am dependent upon Him to preach them. You are dependent upon Him to receive them and understand them.

Three tremendous truths. And even if you're a religious person with a church background, you're not going to understand them until the Holy Spirit of God teaches them to you. You see, you can be religious and still spiritually ignorant. One of the most religious men who ever lived was a man named Nicodemus. He visited Jesus by night. And when they got to talking about spiritual things, Jesus remonstrated with him, and He said, "Are you a master in Israel and you don't know these things?" Now, you see, a master in Israel was a man who was very educated. He had a MI. He had a master's degree. He was a Master of Israel. But he didn't have a BA. He hadn't been born again. And Jesus said to this man, "You must be born again."

And I want to tell you, friend, you can have more degrees than a thermometer and not know the truths that I am talking about today – and will never learn them unless the Holy Spirit. "Oh," you say, "well, I'm going to learn them right now. You just tell them to me and I'm going to write them down." Oh, you'll write them down, and you may get the words right, but you will never understand it. It will never penetrate your consciousness and it will never become real and vital to you until the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit of God, convinces you and convicts you of these things. And He wants to do that this morning. So I'm going to pray today that you'll just open up your heart and your mind to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit teaches you of these three things. Now what are they? Well, look, if you will, in verse 8: "And when he is come (the "he" refers to the Holy Spirit), he will reprove the world (he's talking to the unsaved people when He says the world), he will reprove the world of sin (that's the first thing), of righteousness (that's the second thing), and of judgment (that is the third thing). Now he is dealing with sin, righteousness, and judgment. Now, first of all, when he's dealing with sin, he's talking about you. When he's talking about righteousness, he's talking about Jesus. And when he's talking about judgment, he's talking about Satan, as we're going to see in just a moment.

I. The Severity of Sin

Now the very first thing everybody needs to learn if he is to become a Christian is what I want to call the severity of sin, the severity of sin. Look again in God's Word. "Of sin

(verse 9 says), of sin, because they believe not on me.” Now the essence of sin is not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. We would think that the Bible would say, “Well, the Holy Spirit’s going to convict us of sin because we steal or because we lie or because we’re proud or because we’re hateful, or something like that.” But that’s not what the Bible says. The Bible says, “Of sin, because they believe not on me.”

A. **Man Is a Sinner for What He Is**

Now, basically, if we were to analyze it, a man is a sinner for three reasons. First of all, he is a sinner for what he is, for what he is. The Scripture says that we are by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). In the Psalms, the Bible says, “Behold, in sin did my mother conceive me.” David did not mean that he was conceived out of wedlock. He meant that he was a sinner when he was conceived. The Bible teaches us in the fifth chapter of the book of Romans, “In Adam all die, and by one man’s transgression many were made sinners.”

You say, “Pastor, what does all of that mean?” It means, my dear friend, that when you were born into this world, you are born with a sin nature. You are a sinner because of what you are. Now the world thinks a man is a sinner because of what he does – because he lies and steals and cheats and rapes and murders. They say the world says he’s a sinner because of what he does. But the Bible teaches he does what he does because he is what he is. He’s not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he’s a sinner. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he’s a thief. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he’s a liar. And the problem, first of all, is in him. And what he does is only a symptom of the greater sickness, which is that sin nature that he has in us.

You say, “Well, I just don’t like the idea that I was born a sinner. I just don’t think that’s fair.” Well, fair or not, it’s true. And sin is an ugly thing. But you say, “I just don’t believe what Adam did had any effect on me.” Of course it does. If Adam died before he had children, where would you be? Of course it has effect on you. And just as you inherited certain characteristics from your parents, what your parents were like, it determines what you’re like. And that is true not only physically and psychologically, it’s also true spiritually. You inherited from your parents a sinful nature. They got it from their parents. And they got it from their parents. And they from they’re all the way on back until you go back to Adam.

I think I told you a while back about a lady who met me one day. And she said, “You’re a Rogers, aren’t you?” And I said, “Yes, I am.” Oh, she was so thrilled to meet me. She said, “I am, too.” She said, “I have traced our ancestors back and said you’ll be happy to know that our ancestors, the Rogers, came over on the Mayflower.” I said, “Lady, that’s wonderful, but I’ve traced them back further than that.” She said, “You have?” Oh, she lit up. She was ready for some real information. And I said, “I have

traced it all the way back, and you will be interested to know that we have descended from a crooked farmer and a drunken sailor. The farmer was Adam and the sailor was Noah. And we go all the way back.”

In Adam all die. And so, dear friend, we have received a sinful nature, and we do what we do because we are what we are. We are born into this world. You say, “Well, I’m free. I do whatever I want.” You’re free to sin, but you’re not free not to sin. You see, you have the ability to do what you want, but you don’t have the ability to do as you ought. We are, by nature, the children of wrath. And there’s not a person here but what has a sin nature in him. There is a basic sin nature.

B. Man Is a Sinner for What He Does

And so we’re sinners, first of all, by what we are. And then, we are sinners because of what we do. But we do what we do because we are what we are. The Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Now let’s get it out of the realm of theory. Is there anybody here who has not sinned? I mean, is there anybody here who’s not in some time deceived someone, or told a lie, or at one time been cruel or proud or hard or selfish or lustful or vengeful? Of course not. No one would dare stand up, as the Lord Jesus did, and say, “Which of you convinces me of sin?” All of us know that we have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But that outward sin is the only the proof and the illustration of that inward sin. We are sinners, every one of us, by nature and we’re sinners by practice.

And so, don’t worry so much about Adam as you do worry about you. It’s not Adam’s sin that’s going to send you to hell; it is your sin, for every one of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Whether Adam sinned or not is not the point. Every one of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And God does not hold us guilty for Adam’s sin. God holds us guilty for our sin. We only inherited the sinful nature from Adam. And so, we are sinners. We are sinners, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, we are sinners because of who we are and what we are. Secondly, we are sinners for what we have done. And we’ve all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We’re all from the same mold. Some are moldier than others. And some have committed more sin than others. But it is not the amount of sin; it’s the fact of sin that condemns a man, not the amount. More people drown in 9 feet of water than drown in 90 feet of water. You see, as long as you’re a sinner, that’s all that matters. The Bible says, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, the same is guilty of all.” Here’s a man hanging over a fire by a chain of ten links. How many links in that chain have to break before he falls in the fire? All ten? No, just one. How many of God’s holy Ten Commandments does a man have to break in order to be a sinner – all ten? No, just one. “Whosoever keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, he is guilty of all,” because God demands perfection, and the fact that we don’t give it shows

that we are sinners. We're sinners by birth and nature. We're sinners by practice and by choice.

C. **Man Is a Sinner for What He Has Not Done**

A man is a sinner because of what he is. A man is a sinner because of what he does. But, oh, listen to me. A man is primarily a sinner because of what he's not done. You say, "Wait a minute!" That's true. The sin of omission is greater than the sin of commission. A little boy said, "What are the sins of omission? Are those the sins you ought to have done and didn't do?" No. A sin of omission is failing to do what we ought to do. James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Now what is the greatest sin of omission of all? Well, read it right here in the Scripture. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit of God is come to convict us of sin "...because they believe not on me." The greatest sin, the sin that sends a man to hell, is the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ. Yes, he is a sinner because of what he is. Yes, he is a sinner because of what he does. But he dies and goes to hell because of what he hasn't done, not because of what he does, not because of what he is, but because of what he hasn't done. You see, because if he would do what he ought to do, then what he is and what he has done could be changed. And so the Holy Spirit of God is come to convict the world, that the great sin is the sin of failing to believe in Jesus Christ.

Now I can preach that, and those of you who are listening by radio and television can hear that, but you'll never believe it until the Holy Spirit of God puts the finger on your heart and shows you that. Listen. There is no greater sin than the sin of unbelief. Now the sin of unbelief doesn't sound so bad. Somebody would say, "Surely, sodomy is a worst sin than that. Surely, rape is a worst sin than that. Surely, murder is a worst sin than that. Surely, child abuse is a worst sin than that." There is no greater sin than the sin of unbelief. It is the sin that damns us and send us to hell. John 3:18 says this: "He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because (what?) he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

You see, what is so terrible about the sin of unbelief? Well, the sin of unbelief is a sin against the character and the nature of God. Suppose Ken Babrick were to stand up here and say a lot of nice things about the pastor? And about that time I'd be sitting up straight and smiling. And, but then he'd just say, "But there's one thing about the pastor. You just can't believe him." Well, you know, if he said that, he's just cut the tap root of my character. I mean, if he can't believe me, then I'm rotten through and through. The Bible says, "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." Dear friend, if you don't believe God, it's treating God as though He's a liar. Do you see? Unbelief never comes out of the head. You say, "I have intellectual difficulties." No, you don't. You have dirty,

rotten sin. Unbelief always come out of the heart. “Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” That’s the reason the Bible says, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. He that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” The mother sin, the father sin, the parent’s sin, the sin of all sins is the sin of unbelief because that sin of unbelief makes God a liar. It is rebellion against God. It is the refusal of God.

Now this clears something up. You know, we teach people, “Well, if you keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, you’re guilty of all. If you steal, if you lie, if you kill.” Somebody says, “Well, maybe that’s true. But I just don’t think God’s going to let me go to hell forever just because I told a lie. I mean, that’s just not fair. The punishment and the crime – they’re, they’re not equal. That would be like putting a man in the penitentiary for life because he stole a loaf of bread.” Well, my dear friend, you do not go to hell because you told a lie primarily. You go to hell because of your refusal to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now I’ll tell you, in any court, high treason is a serious crime. And what happens when a man refuses Christ? When a man refuses to love and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, he is guilty of high treason against heaven’s King. Now only the Holy Spirit can convict you of that. I can preach it to you, but I’m telling you, my dear friend, when God comes to measure you, and when God comes to judge you, God is not going to judge you primarily because you lied or because you stole or because you were proud or because you were lazy or because you were impure. But God is going to say, “What did you do with My Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Did you receive Him? Did you love Him? Did you honor the one who created you, fashioned you, and died for you? The Holy Spirit of God has come to convince us that the sin of all sins is that sin of refusing Jesus Christ.

Now pay attention. The worst sin, many times, is not committed in the house of prostitution or in the porno palace or in the drug den or in the back room of some honky-tonk. The worst sin is many times committed in the house of God, and it is the sin of refusing to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And I’ll stand up here this morning and I will give you an invitation. I will say, “I want you to yield your heart to Jesus Christ, to open your heart, to receive Him, to believe on Him.” And you say, “I will not do it!” My dear friend, you’re signing your death warrant. The Bible says the Holy Spirit of God is come to convict us of sin because we believe not on Christ. Do you understand it? Do you understand it? We are sinners because of what we are. We are sinners because of what we do. But we’re lost sinners because of what we’ve not done, and that is to receive Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. And I pray God that the Holy Spirit of God will not cause somebody to walk out of here today and say, “Well, I’m not all that bad.”

My dear friend, listen to me. It’s not what you’ve done; it’s what you’re capable of

doing. If a rabid dog were turned loose in this auditorium, he'd be penned up, caged up, and finally killed, even before he bit anybody – not because of what he did; what he's capable of doing. You see, it is that sin nature that makes us sinners. And you may be outwardly moral. You may be a reformed person. You may say, "Well, I used to do bad, but I don't do it anymore. I've reformed." Well, that's not going to get you to heaven. A man may have been a drunkard and he gets sober, but he doesn't receive Christ. All that means then he's going to hell sober. He must be born again. There's nobody – listen, I've said it before – nobody so good he need not be saved; nobody so bad he cannot be saved. But, dear friend, the sin that will damn you forever is the sin of refusing God's only Son, the Lord Jesus. Again, I want to give you the Scripture. "Of sin," he says, "because they believe not on me." John 3:18: "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."

II. The Sufficiency of the Savior

Now the second truth that you'll never learn apart from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Not only is a truth concerning the severity of sin, but also there's a second truth concerning the sufficiency of the Savior. Notice in verse 10. The Holy Spirit is also come to convict me of righteousness, Jesus said, "...because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Now what, why did He say that? "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Because righteousness and the ascension of Jesus Christ are linked together. Now the world, and I'm going to show you that in a moment, but let me say that the world is just as ignorant concerning righteousness as the world is concerning sin. You know what the world thinks that sin is? Merely doing wrong. The world has no idea about the sin nature and the refusal of Jesus Christ. The world just thinks well, sin is just doing bad things. So what does the world think that righteousness is? The world thinks that righteousness, thereby, is just doing good.

If you were to go out here on the Mid-America Mall and say, "I'm taking a survey. What is necessary for a man to be received into heaven?" And most people would say something like this: "Well, do good. Keep the Ten Commandments. Obey the Golden Rule. Treat your neighbor as you want to be treated." And the world has an idea that if we are good boys and girls, we'll go to heaven. That's what they told me when I was a little boy. "If you want to go to heaven, be good, because good boys go to heaven and bad boys go to that other place that's not polite to mention." Isn't that what you thought? I grew up, before I learned the Bible, kind of thinking that God was sort of a glorified Santa Claus, making a list and checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty or nice. And that when I came to the judgment, that at the judgment....over here were going to be all of the good things I did and over here were going to be all of the bad things I did,

and God was going to weigh the good against the bad. And if I had done more good than bad, He'd say, "Well, congratulations. You made it into heaven. You're such a good boy." But, on the other hand, if I did so many bad things, He would say, "You weren't good enough to get to heaven."

And, oh friend, that's so foolish. That's the world concept of righteousness. The apostle Paul said, concerning the Hebrews of his day in Romans 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Now what does that mean? When a man is ignorant of God's righteousness, he goes about to establish his own righteousness. He has his own little form of trying to be right with God. And, dear friend, your own righteousness, Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 64, is "as filthy rags in God's sight." Your righteousness. And you know what that word *filthy rags* means? It is the word to describe the bandage that used to wrap the leper's sore when there would be the putrefying, decaying flesh of a leper. And he would take the bandage from that decaying flesh and cast it away to be burned. God said, concerning that bandage, that defiled piece of cloth, God says, "Your righteousness is as a filthy rag in My sight, as a defiled bandage from a leper's sore." That's what your righteousness is.

The very fact that you worked in the church, and sang in the choir, and gave your money, and worked in the PTA, and helped little children, and all of those things – all well and good in and of themselves. But, dear friend, none of these things can save you. In God's sight, those things are as filthy rags. Only the Holy Spirit of God can show you what real righteousness is. And when a man does not understand what God's demands for righteousness are, he goes about to establish his own righteousness, and he does not submit himself to the righteousness of God.

Now, dear friend, there's no righteousness apart from Jesus Christ. And that's the reason the Bible says the Holy Spirit is come to convince men of righteousness, because I go to my Father. Now why did He say, "Because I go to my Father?" When did Jesus go to His Father? After He was raised from the dead. He ascended and went to the Father. Now what does that mean? It means this, dear friend, that the resurrection, the ascension, the enthronement of the Lord Jesus Christ is the capstone of everything He did, said, and taught. How do we know that Jesus Christ was not just a religious leader? How do we know that He was not just some egomaniac? How do we know that He was not just some deluded fool? How do we know that He was not just one more of the world's religious leaders? How do we know that He is indeed the Son of God with power? How do we know that we can count on who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ did? I mean, how do we know? There have been many religious leaders. I'll tell you the difference. Buddha lived, he died, and he's dead. Mohammad lived, he died, and he's dead. Confucius lived and died, and he's dead. Jesus lived and died, and

rose again. Say amen! He rose again. And the Bible says He is shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. Had He been a faker, had He been an imposter, had He been some other person than He claimed to be, He would never have been raised up by the power of God and ascended into the glory. But, dear friend, He is shown to be our righteousness by the fact that God raised Him from the dead. He died for our sins. He was raised again for our justification. And that justification is in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone. There is no other way. No way that you can go to heaven apart from Jesus Christ. Does that sound narrow?

Somebody asked me some time. I'll get on the television or radio interview or a newspaper interview, and someone....You know, they always try to make us look bigoted and narrow minded. And they say, "Well, Mr. Rogers, do you believe that a person of thus and such a religion is lost without Jesus Christ?" And if I say yes, then it sounds like I'm a bigot. I have a good answer for them. I say, "My friend, I believe that one of my own children without Jesus Christ is lost." It doesn't make any difference who it is. In Christ there is salvation. He's the only way.

You say, "Well, I believe that God has several ways or there's some other way." Well, the Bible says very clearly in the book of Galatians 2:21, that "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Do you know what that means? It means, dear friend, if there's some other way, if a man could be saved, if a man could be righteousness, if a man could be right with God any other way than through the cross of Jesus Christ, then the cross of Jesus Christ was the blunder of the ages; that God let His darling, precious Son die in agony and blood upon that cross when we could be saved just by being good. Oh no. Righteousness is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit is come to convict you of righteousness, because I go to my Father," what Jesus meant by that is this: The very fact that I'm going to be buried and raised from the dead and ascend to the right hand of the Father on high is proof positive that this is the only way to heaven. The only way to deal with sin is in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, remember we said that a man is a sinner for three reasons? First of all, a man is a sinner because of what that man is, and then what he has done, and then what he's not done, right? I want you to see how the death of Jesus Christ takes care of all of those things. First of all, dear friend, what happens when, through the death of Jesus Christ, what we are is changed. You see, because He died for me and rose for me and gave Himself to me, I now have become a partaker of the divine nature. Now, before I was, by nature, a child of wrath. Now, I, by nature, am a child of God. I'm not bragging on me. I'm bragging on Him. But as the apostle Peter said, "We have become partakers of the divine nature." There has been in my heart a supernatural change. You say, "Adrian, you mean you don't sin anymore?" Oh, I sin. I have sin and I hate it. And I

believe I'd rather eat dirt than to willingly sin. But there's a difference, friend. Before I was saved I was running to sin. Now I'm running from sin. And one of these days I'm not going to sin anymore because in my heart and in my life there is a change. I know it is there. I know a supernatural change took place in my heart and in my life. And Jesus, praise His name, changed what I was. But now, listen. I've got another problem. Not only what I was, but what I did. I did what I did because I was what I was. But not only has He changed my nature; He's forgiven my sins. And all of my sins are beneath the blood of Jesus Christ. And not one blot, not one blemish, not one blur can ever be marked up to my account, because the Bible says, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin." Hallelujah! Those sins are forgiven. They're under the blood – past, present, and future. They are all forgiven, never, never to be marked up against me anymore. "Blessed is the man to whom God will not impute sin," the Bible says in Romans 4. God will never put sin on my account, and so, therefore, the death of Jesus Christ takes care of not only what I was, but what I did. You say, "But what about what you have not done? What about the sin of omission?" It takes care of that, too. "Blessed is the man to whom God imputed righteousness apart from the works of the law." What does that mean? God just simply put righteousness on my account. He imputes it. What does the word *impute* mean? It means that God places that on my account. When you go to the department store and buy something, you say, "Charge it." If you lived in this day, you would say, "impute it." That is, put it on my account. Now what God did was God put His righteousness on my account.

One day, as a teenage boy so heavy with sin, so filled with doubt, I stopped on the corner of 39th Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida, and I prayed. I'd been wrestling with this thing for a long time, because I'd been a church member, but never really sure that I was saved. And I stopped and I looked up into the heavens, and I said, "Oh God, I don't know whether I'm lost and the Holy Spirit is trying to bring me under conviction, or whether I'm saved and the devil is trying to make me doubt it, but I don't have that assurance, I don't have that peace. And right now, dear God, I want to know that I'm saved. And I've studied Your Bible, and I know that You said that You will save me by Your grace, and that You will forgive my sin if I will trust You." And so I prayed, and I said like this, "Oh God, right now with all of my heart, once and forever, as much as in me is, I trust You, Jesus, and You alone. I don't look for a feeling. I don't look for any sign. I take You at Your Word. I claim You now as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sins. Come into my heart and save me." And He did right there on the spot. And a river of peace began to flow through my heart and through my soul, and that river of peace is flowing in my heart and in my life right now. And I know, praise God, I know that I'm saved. And when I said, "Lord Jesus, I trust You," not only did He change what I was, not only did He forgive what I'd done, but He said, "Now I make Adrian Rogers

righteous,” and He imputed to me that righteousness.

Friend, listen. Adam, before he sinned, was only innocent. I am righteous. I had rather be living, dear friend, in Romans 4 and 5 than to be living in the Garden of Eden. I had rather be a saved sinner than to be an innocent angel. I am telling you that God sees the righteousness of God in me. And when God looks at me, He doesn't see me. He sees His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, dear friend, through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God changed what I was. He forgave what I did. And He has made up for what I did not do. And He has given me of His positive righteousness. And just pardon me, but, praise God! Hallelujah! That's the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And these people running around trying to establish their own righteousness. Well, you say, “Pastor, they're sincere.” Sincerity has nothing to do about it. They being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,” Paul said with a broken heart. If I were to take a, a glass of sulfuric acid and put it up here on one corner of this pulpit and a glass of water, H₂O, and put it on this other corner, and you'd look at them and you'd not be able to tell the difference simply by looking. Both of them clear, odorless, colorless liquid. Sulfuric acid, deadly poison. Water, necessary for life. H₂O, H₂SO₄. Now suppose somebody comes up here and he takes H₂SO₄ and he thinks it's H₂O and he drinks it. He may be sincere, but he'd be sincerely dead. Poor Willy is no longer with us; his face we'll see no more. What he thought was H₂O was H₂SO₄. And it is possible that a person can be sincerely wrong. You say, “Well, I like my religion.” It doesn't make any difference, friend. I am telling you that if righteousness come by the law or any other way, Christ is dead in vain. Only the Holy Spirit of God can show you. And I pray God the Holy Spirit of God will show you that Jesus Christ is righteousness for you, because He has ascended. He's gone to the Father. It is proof positive that He is, indeed, the Son of God with power.

III. The Surety of Satan's Judgment

Now the third thing that you'll never learn apart from the teaching of the Holy Spirit is not only the truth concerning sin and the truth concerning the Savior, but also the truth concerning Satan. Look, if you will, in verse 11: “Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” Now who is the prince of this world? The devil is the prince of this world. He is called the god of this age. He is called the prince of the powers of darkness. He's called the prince of this world. Now notice, Jesus did not say that the prince of this world will be judged. Jesus said, “The prince of this world is judged.” It's a perfect tense. That means it's already done. It is finished. It's over. When was Satan judged? Well, if you read John 12, you find out when Satan was judged. When Jesus Christ was facing the cross, Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world. Now is the

prince of this world cast out.” What did He mean by that? By His death on the cross not only did He provide salvation for me, but He guaranteed judgment for those who are outside of Christ.

Now some of you have the idea that you’re going to escape judgment. You think, well, you know, pastor, I may not be a Christian, but somehow God is going to let me by without receiving Christ. No, my friend. There is no other way. You see, if you are of Satan, and you are of Satan unless you’re of Christ. Jesus said, “He that is not with Me is against Me.” Jesus said to the unsaved Pharisees in John 8:44, “Ye are of your father, the devil.” If you are in his domain, then you’re going to suffer the judgment that comes to him. Now, you see, the Bible says in Matthew 12 that hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Never get the idea that over here is Satan and his kingdom, and over here is God and His kingdom, and there’s a great war going on, and we’re going to see how it comes out later on. Maybe God will win. Maybe Satan will win. Satan’s already lost. I mean, he sails a sinking ship. He rules over a doomed domain. And when he gets in hell, he will not be the lord of hell with a pitchfork. He will suffer in hell. He is a loser.

Conclusion

Now what, what, what is Jesus saying? Oh listen to me. He shows us what sin is. He shows us the way out of sin. And then He says, “Make no mistake about it, sin cannot win. Faith cannot fail.” And if you follow Satan, you’re following a loser. He is already judged. You’re on your way to hell. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. And there is no hope outside of Jesus Christ. You say, “Pastor, that’s a narrow message.” That is the Bible message. I am telling you that Christ, and Christ alone, is the escape from hell. And without the Lord Jesus Christ there is nothing that a righteous and a holy God can do to keep you from the torments of hell. The prince of this world is already judged. It, he has been adjudicated guilty. And one of these days—he’s not in the lake of fire now—he will be cast into the lake of fire. But sentence has already been passed upon him. And what Jesus is saying is that truth is higher than lies, and that righteousness is greater than sin, and that God will reign and rule, and that we need to choose sides and choose sides carefully.

Are you saved? Do you know that you’re saved? I mean, if this were your last moment. If you were to stand before God, and God would say, “You’re a sinner. You’re a sinner not primarily for what you have done, nor what you are, but you’re a sinner because you’ve not received Christ,” what would you say? Would you say, “Oh God, give me another chance.” He’d say, “No, judgment for you is already passed.” You see, what does a man have to do to be lost? Nothing. He’s lost already. What does he have to do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 2, 1992

Main Scripture Text: John 17:1–4

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

JOHN 17:1–4

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word, and turn please to John chapter seventeen. Tonight I want us to study on this subject, “The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed”—John chapter seventeen. You know, this is a prayer of the Lord Jesus. We’re beginning a prayer ministry. And I don’t know any way that we can learn to pray anymore than to study the prayer that Jesus prayed. It’s a deep and profound prayer, but it’s certainly not very long, just one chapter in the Word of God.

Now, what a privilege is ours as it were to eavesdrop on the Son of God when He prays. To hear the Son of God pray. What a privilege. And so I want us to look into these words here. I’m reading here John seventeen, verses one through four. These words take Jesus and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour is come, glorify thy son so that thy son may also glorify thee. As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal that they may know thee, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” I want to stop right there and try to make some observations and obviously we were just going to skirt the shores of this mighty ocean of truth right here.

I. The Person of the Prayer

But first of all I want you to notice the person who is doing the praying. It is Jesus Christ himself. Look, if you will, in verse one. “These words spake Jesus and lifted up His eyes

to heaven.” I can see Him praying this way. Looking straight up into the sky. And I have prayed that way sometime and we are told that we must bow our heads in prayer. Sometimes it is sweet and wonderful just to lift our hands and to look into the face of God. But the thing that impresses me is that Jesus, being the very Son of God, absolutely sinless, needed and desired to pray.

I’ve selected some verses that tell us how Jesus prayed, and don’t turn to these but let me share them with you. Luke chapter five verses fifteen and sixteen. Bible says, “But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him, and great multitudes came together to hear and be healed of Him of their infirmities. And He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.” Right in the height of His ministry, multitudes by the thousands are coming; miracles are being performed. And what does He do? More important than that ministry, more important than miracles, more important than preaching is prayer. Jesus withdrew himself to pray.

Again, Luke chapter six and verse twelve: “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.” Have you ever spent an entire night in prayer? Jesus did. The very Son of God prayed all night. Do you awaken in the morning to pray? Mark chapter one, verse thirty-five: “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place and there He prayed.”

Now, remember this. That Jesus Christ was truly God, but He was also truly man and as a man, and as my example He prayed. Now, if I am a follower of Jesus, I am going to be a pray-er, because by precept and by example of the Lord Jesus Christ both prayed and He taught me to pray. Now, that’s the person of the prayer.

II. The Period of the Prayer

Now I want you to see the time or the period when He prayed. Look if you will again, “These words spake Jesus and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.” That is this prayer was a prayer at a particular period of time. There was something that caused Jesus that impelled Jesus to pray. And if you look at the context, you’ll see that there were at least three things that that compelled Him to pray. One is, He had just culminated His teaching.

Now, this prayer comes on the heels of one of the greatest sections of teaching in the entire Bible, it’s what we call the upper room discourse. And there in the upper room discourse, the Lord Jesus taught them about the Lords supper, He taught them about heaven in John fourteen, He taught them about abiding in Him in John fifteen, He talked to them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He taught them about love, He taught them about prayer, and He taught them about all of these things and then when He had finished teaching them, He began to pray for them.

How many of you are Sunday school teachers? Let me see your hands? A great number of Sunday School teachers are here. Well, now let me tell you something friend. That you must not only teach your pupils, but you must seal your teaching with prayer. Prayer and teaching go hand in hand. Prayer and preaching go hand in hand. The Apostles said in acts chapter six and verse four, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word of God. And so as we sow the seed of the Word, we must pray for people that God will open their hearts and help them to understand it. That's one reason I believe the Lord Jesus prayed for them after He taught them.

But not only was it the culmination of His teaching, but the Lord Jesus now was going to be separated from them. This was a time of separation. Look if you will in chapter sixteen verse thirty two. Behold, the hour cometh, yet now is come that ye shall be scattered every man to His own and shall leave me alone and yet I am not alone because the Father's with me. He knew that they would be scattered from Him and He knew that after awhile He's going to be taken from them. And so He prayed for them. As I meditated on this today, I thought again you know, the wonderful thing about prayer is that it transcends two things that seem to be barriers to us. One is time, and the other is space.

Now the disciples were leaving Him, but time and space are not barriers to prayer. For example, in this in this prayer, were going to see that Jesus prayed for His disciples, and then He said, I don't just pray for these, I pray for those who will believe on me through their word. He prayed for me. That prayer is two thousand years old, and yet it has had effect in my life. Isn't that wonderful? You see, that's a wonderful thing about prayer. Prayer just transcends time. Prayer can be like a missile with a delayed destination. It can be fired through the centuries.

Do you pray for your grandchildren before they are born? I have some grandchildren now, and I pray a lot for my grandchildren, and I have already begun to pray for the people they are going to marry. Now, that's about forty years from now, because them I'm not going to let them get married real young but I'm praying for those that that they will marry. Do you know in this day and this age where there's so much sin and so much immorality, and very frankly, so many sexual diseases, we need to begin to pray for the mates of our little grandchildren don't we and our children. You know you just look out in the future and you know also that that prayer, not only does it transcend time, it transcends space.

Jesus was going away, the disciples were going to be scattered, and yet Jesus prayed for them. Do you know Joyce and I did some business in Spain this morning at our breakfast table? We were able to do business in Madrid, Spain, sitting at the breakfast table. How did we do business in Madrid, Spain? Well, we just simply bowed our heads and held our hands together, and prayed for our children in Spain and for

their church. Isn't that a wonderful thing about prayer? You see, prayer can move and do anything that God can do. And so, when is Jesus praying? Well, He's praying after He's taught His disciples and He's taking His prayer just to seal the message home and He's praying when the disciples are going to be scattered; but Jesus is letting His prayers follow them, not only wherever they would go, but down through the corridors of time.

And then, Jesus is praying when He's about to face the cross. Now when He says Father, in this verse, the hour is come. What hour is He talking about? Well, He's talking about His crucifixion. He is preparing for Cavalry. And you know, prayer prepares us for anything. And the best preparation for anything is to pray. I saw something the other day that really challenged me. As a matter of fact, it convicted me. It said a person not to ever try to do more than He can pray over.

Jesus is saying the hour is come. He knows what He's facing. Do you know the reason we worry so much? Well, I'll tell you worry looks at God through the circumstances. But prayer looks at the circumstances through God. And so here's the Lord Jesus the person of the prayer, the period of the prayer.

III. The Purpose of the Prayer

But now I want you to see the purpose of the prayer. Just let's just tighten the focus a little bit. What is what was the purpose of the prayer of the Lord Jesus? The hour is come, glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee. Oh, what was the purpose of this prayer? That God would be glorified. Notice in verse four. "I have glorified thee on the earth." Well, how did He glorify the Father? "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Well, how did He finish the work God gave Him to do? Well, He finished the work that God gave Him to do, through prayer. That is, prayer enabled Him to finish the work that God gave Him to do. And by finishing the work that God gave Him to do, He glorified the Father.

Now, here's a prayer. It's a personal prayer, but it is not a selfish prayer. And in the first five verses the word glory or glorify is used five times. That is, prayer is wrapped up in the glory of God. Do you, if you just take prayer and analyze it, that's what prayer is all about, it is giving glory to God. Jesus taught us this when He taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name." Now when we begin to pray more with the glory of God in mind, our prayer life is going to be more like the prayer life of the Lord Jesus, God is going to be glorified.

Now, let's just pause here on this part and think for a moment about the purpose of prayer. The purpose of prayer is that we might do what God would have use to do and that we might finish the work that God gave us to do. And therefore God will be glorified. I believe this. The most important thing that you could say or that I could say ever when we come to die is just simply this. I did what God gave me to do. Isn't that true? What

could be greater than that? Just to simply say I have finished the work that God has given me to do. Nothing is more important than that. Now, what does it take in order to be able to say that? Well, number one, knowledge of what God wants you to do. And number two, power to do it. Right? Knowledge of what God wants you to do, and the power to do it.

Now, how are you going to get knowledge and power to know and to do what God wants you to do? How did Jesus have both the knowledge and power to do what God the Father wanted Him to do? He had that through prayer. There's a principle here in John chapter seventeen and I want to show you. And I want to tell you that if you will prayerfully apply this principle, I will guarantee you that you will both know and finish the will of God for your life. Guarantee. If it doesn't work, you come see me and I'll give you double your listening back. Now, you just pay attention and this is this iron clad. This is guaranteed. That if you'll pay attention now, you will be able both to know and have the power to do and finish the work that God gave you to do. And it's right here in John chapter seventeen. It is a principle.

Now, here's the principle that brings glory to God. Jesus lived by this principle. Just fast-forward to verse seventeen. Jesus is still praying. He's praying for me, He's praying for you. And He says, "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth." Do you think Jesus believed in the inerrancy of the Scripture? I do. "Thy word is truth. Even as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one as thou Father art in me and I in thee. That they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory"—now He's back to glory again—"and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them as thou hast loved me."

Huh. You say Pastor, I was trying to pay attention, but very frankly that's just a lot of words. And I know how you feel—it's kind of hard just to listen to a longer passage like that read. Now, let's just break it down. I'm talking now about being able to say I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do. And I said that in order for you to say that you must both know the work and have the power to do the work. And then I said that Jesus lived by certain principle. And if you will take the principle of Jesus and make it your principle, you will be able to say what the Lord Jesus said.

Now, it is very obvious and very clear that God had a plan for the Lord Jesus. Now, He says in verse nineteen, "I sanctify myself." Now, what does the word sanctify mean? Sanctification means to be set aside for and intelligent purpose. I'll ask you that on the

examination later, so write it down. Sanctification, you didn't know we were taking a test, did you? Sanctification is to be set apart for an intelligent purpose.

Now, Jesus Christ set himself apart for the purpose of the Father. That's what Jesus did. Jesus just simply presented himself to the Father. He said I set myself apart. I present myself to you Father, that your will might be done in me. Do you know that it's prophesied of the Lord Jesus in Hebrew chapter ten and verse seven, Jesus is speaking: "Lo, I come in the volume of the Book it is written of me, to do thy will oh God." That's what Jesus came for: to do the will of God. That's what Jesus set himself apart for. Now, and He said, lo, I come it is written in the volume of the book to do thy will oh God. Now, what did He mean, the volume of the book? He meant the Old Testament. Do you know what the Old Testament was? It was a prophecy and a blueprint of the will of God for the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a story already written and now Jesus said, I have finished the story. I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. I came to do your will; it was written in the volume of the book, and now, Father, it is finished. Well, how was it finished? Jesus set himself apart to do it. And He said, I do always those things that please my Father. I just present myself to you Lord. I sanctify myself; I set myself apart for the will of God.

Have you done that? Have you sanctified yourself? We ask God to sanctify us. There comes a time when you sanctify yourself. You choose. Definitely, deliberately, you say I come to do your will oh God. You say, well, no that was Jesus. That's not me. But the point is, and you're going to see it in a moment, that the principle that was in Christ, He prayed, would be in you. Look at it now in verse seventeen: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Now watch this, verse eighteen. "As, as "underscore it "as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world in the same way." The principle that Jesus operated by is the principle that you are to operate by, exactly the same way. Look in verse nineteen: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through thy truth." Just as I set myself apart, for the intelligent purpose of God, they are to be set aside by the truth of the Word of God for the intelligent purposes of God.

When I was a much younger preacher, and I'm still a very young preacher, but when I was a much younger preacher, I was in a bookstore in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And I picked up a book by Major Thomas called "The Saving Life of Christ." If you've never read it, I suggest you get in and read it. Sometimes people ask me about some of the books that have had the greatest impact on my life. Beyond the shadow of any doubt, that one volume is among the books that has had the greatest impact on my life. Now, I didn't even, I had never even heard of Major Thomas. But I picked up that book entitled "The Saving Life of Christ." What a wonderful book that was. And Major Thomas is one of the most delightful teachers of the Bible that there is.

And he asked a question. Which of these things in the life of Jesus is more spiritual? What would you say Jesus was doing that was the most spiritual? A—when He preached the Sermon on the Mount; B—when He raised Lazarus from the dead; C—when He washed His disciples’ feet; or D—when He spat on the ground and made clay to anoint the blind man’s eyes: which would you say was the most spiritual? Would you say preaching or shouting, which raised Lazarus from the dead? Or washing? Or spitting? Which was the most spiritual?

Well, Dr. Thomas said, none was the most spiritual; they were all equally spiritual. Because Jesus said, I do always those things that please Him. It was just as spiritual for Jesus to spit as it was to preach. I’m not being cruel. I’m not being cruel. You see, for Jesus, He did not divide His life up into little segments where some was more things more spiritual than others. When Jesus came to the Lord, Jesus did not surrender to preach. Nor did He surrender to spit. He surrendered to God to preach or to spit. Just simply to be available. If you want me to preach the Sermon on the Mount, I’ll preach it. If you want me to shout at the grave of Lazarus, I’ll shout. If you want me to wash the disciples’ feet, I’ll wash the disciples’ feet. If you want me to spit on the ground and make clay to anoint a blind mans eyes, I’ll do that.

Now, listen. What is the will of God? How do you know the will of God? Pay attention. I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again many more times. The will of God is not a road map; it is a relationship. It is a relationship. You just simply sanctify yourself. You just simply set yourself apart to do the will of God.

Now, go out into the tool shop and there is a tool. What is that tool to be committed to? Is that tool to be committed to a task? Or is the tool to be committed to the carpenter? The tool is to be committed not to a task the tool is to be committed to the carpenter. The carpenter is committed to the task. Right? Now, we are tools in the carpenter’s hand. We are not committed to a task. We are committed to Jesus Christ. We are the tool. God is the craftsman.

Now the problem with so many people wanting the will of God is they want to surrender to a task. Or they want to surrender to a field. Sometimes in a missionary service, a missionary will come with the slides. Maybe it will be slides of hungry children. Maybe it’ll be slides of great multitudes that need to be saved. Maybe it will be slides of university students waiting to be taught. And then He will say, listen, you don’t need any special call. The need is the call. I’ve heard that so many times. The need is the call. Well, may I tell you, my dear friend, that’s silly. That’s foolish. The need is not the call. Why? Because there are so many needs. You talk about being frustrated—if you say the need is the call, what are you going to do? I mean we said, we feel that were needed in Romania. And so we’ve been praying about a trip to Romania, and we feel that God wants us to go and our world mission’s conference is going to be about

Romania, going over to Romania. But then, well, we've got to be hearing about Russia. And by the way, we have two staff members who are tonight in St. Petersburg, formally Leningrad. Dan Greer is there tonight—pray for him. David Ripley, who is a de facto staff member and an evangelist at large and Bellevue member all over the world, is over there right now praying and looking and listening and trying to find the will of God for this church. But if they were to come back and say there is a need, therefore you ought to go, no! There are needs everywhere. There are needs in Brazil; there are needs in South Africa; there are needs in Romania; there are needs in Russia, former Soviet Russia. There are needs everywhere.

Listen, my dear friend. You do not surrender to a task; you do not surrender to a place; you surrender to a person. It's not the tool that surrenders to the task. The tool surrenders to the carpenter.

I think of people who surrender to a task. Moses—Moses surrendered to a task. He's going to lead the people out of out of Egypt. Started out to be a missionary; ended up being a murderer. He couldn't understand it. He said, I thought they knew by my right hand I was going to lead them. Abraham and Sarah, rather than being committed to a person, got committed to a task. They are going to have a son. And God had promised a son, but they can't wait on Him, so they have a committee meeting. And they get Hagar—they co-opt her into the committee. And they produce an Ishmael. And for fifteen years Abraham is trying to talk God into using Ishmael to bless the world. But God would not do it. Abraham committed to a task, did what Abraham could do without God. But finally after fifteen years, Abraham gets committed to God and does what God can do without Abraham. God does something that was entirely and completely without explanation.

Now, let me tell you what a fanatic is. Do you know what a fanatic is? A fanatic is someone who is committed to a cause or to a purpose rather than to God. That's what he is. Jesus just simply said, Father, I come to do your will. I am committed to you. I sanctify myself. I just set myself apart to do your will. And then He said Father, as you have sent me, in the same way in the same manner, I'm praying for these, that they will be sanctified. Now, what was Jesus sanctified for? The glory of God—the glory of God. Glorify thy Son so that thy Son may glorify thee. He's saying it over and over again that God would be glorified through Him.

Now, what is the will of God for Adrian Rogers? What is the will of God for Scotty Shows? What is the will of God for Velma Ray Torbett? What is the will of God for Billy Graham? What is the will of God for you? Would you like it in one word? Now, you're going to think this is nonsensical when I tell you this, but I'm going to tell you what it is: the will of God for you is Jesus. Now you say, yeah, I mean I know I'm to love Him and everything, but how is Jesus the will of God for me? Well, you just simply come and you

present yourself to Jesus Christ totally.

Look, if you will, in verse twenty-three. I in them, and thou in me. Now, Father, I'm going to be in Adrian. And, Father, your going to be in me. "That they may be made perfect in one. That the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them as thou hast loved me." Now, Jesus said, the world needs to believe. How is the world going to believe? Well now, Father, just as you are in me, because I have set myself apart to do your will. Lord, I will be in them as you are in me, because they have set themselves apart to do your will. And then Lord. Father, the world will begin to believe.

You see, Paul told the church at Corinth that we are the body of Christ. And the Holy Spirit of God indwells the church. And as the Holy Spirit of God indwells the church, He makes the life of the Lord Jesus real to us.

Now, I'm a member of the body of Jesus. And you are a member of the body of Jesus. Before Bethlehem, there was no physical body. After Bethlehem, the body of Christ was one. And then, at Pentecost, the body of Christ was 120—120 sets of eyes, 120 mouths. And then, when those preached, the body of Christ was 3,120 pairs of eyes, pairs of hands, pairs of feet—3,120 mouths to speak. And all of them are the body of Christ. Christ is the head, giving direction. And the members are not surrendered to a task. The members are simply committed to the head.

Now, my hand is a part of my body. I do not want my hand committed to any task. Believe me, I would be afraid of it. I want my hand to be sensitive to the head, that's all. And when I write a letter or when I make my sermon notes, I want this hand to be there, surrendered to the impulses of the head, that's all. What is my will for my hand? Me. Me. My will for my hand is me. What is God's will for you? Jesus. That's the reason I said the will of God is Jesus. The will of God is just simply Jesus. He is the head. That is the will of God for you. Not some place not some task, but Jesus Christ himself.

Now, my hand is not to do anything for me of it's own. It's not a committee of five to meet and vote. What are we going to do today for Adrian? Good morning, Mr. Rogers. Get away. Listen. My hand is there just simply to obey the impulses from the head. And the will of Adrian for his hand is Adrian.

And the will of Jesus for His body is Jesus. Jesus said to the Father, I come to do your will, O God. Now, that, my dear friend, is what you're to do—you're to present yourself to Jesus Christ. You have but one responsibility, and that is just to present yourself to Him. Have you presented yourself to Jesus Christ? Is Jesus Christ presented himself to the Father? If you do, here's what's going to happen. Romans chapter twelve, verses one and two: "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present yourself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to the world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind and you will prove"—and that means you'll prove experimentally—"what is

the good and perfect, and acceptable will of God.”

Now, you say, but God had a plan for Jesus. And, lo it is written in the volume of the book. God had an Old Testament plan for the Lord Jesus. But God doesn't have a plan for me. Oh yes, He does. Yes, He does. Just as God had a plan for the Lord Jesus Christ, God has a plan for you. Ephesians two, verses eight and nine and ten: “For by grace are ye saved and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of god, not of works lest any man should boast.” Now watch it. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,”—are you listening?—“which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Before ordained. God told Jeremiah while you were in your mother's womb I ordained you that you would be a prophet. Well, you say, then why didn't he surrender to be a prophet? No. He surrenders to the Lord and that's the way he knew he was to be a prophet.

Now, my dear friend, what I'm trying to say again is you just simply come to the Lord. God's will for you is Jesus Christ. You have but one responsibility. And that is just simply to present yourself. Proverbs chapter three, verses five and six: “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path.” You don't find the will of God. The will of God finds you. The Holy Spirit is to you what instinct is to a bird. It's instinct that that guides the birds on their migratory path. It is the Holy Spirit of God that guides you day by day as you surrender yourself to Him. To the Lord Jesus.

Conclusion

Question time. Are you ready for the question? Is all there is of you committed to all that you know and all there is of Jesus Christ? That is the will of God for your life. If you do this, commit all there is of you to all there is of Jesus Christ. If you do this, you cannot miss the will of God. If you don't do it, you cannot find the will of God. Wasn't that simple? Why didn't I say it shorter? The person of the prayer—Jesus is praying. The period of the prayer—He's facing the cross; He's being separated from His disciples. The purpose of the prayer—that God would be glorified in Him and that we would find the same truths in our own hearts and in our own lives. Bow your heads in prayer with me. Would you say, I come to do thy will, O God? Lord, I'm not surrendering to a task or to a cause. I'm surrendering to you. I sanctify myself. I set myself aside for your intelligent purposes. I present myself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto you. Father, I pray that you will help us to do this tonight, in Jesus holy name we pray. Lord if there is someone here tonight who's struggling. Maybe there is someone who doesn't want to give up. Afraid that he or she will lose his or her life. Maybe they have plans for a law degree, a degree in medicine. Maybe they are accumulating retirement funds. Maybe they plan to marry a certain boy or girl. And they're afraid if they just say, Lord, I

come to do your will, that they might not get to marry that person. Or you might lay hold on those funds. Or you may redirect that vocation that they have chosen. Now, Lord Jesus, if you loved us enough to die for us, the only reasonable thing that we can do is present ourselves a living sacrifice. Lord, that's our reasonable service. We're not afraid of your will Lord. Your will is good, perfect and acceptable. And Lord, we know through prayer, we'll find it. Lord, I pray if there is someone struggling right now that you'd help that person. Right now in an act of faith and trust, just to sing it, to say it, to mean it, have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Knowing the Will of God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 4, 2001

Main Scripture Text: John 17:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Is the Pattern for Knowing the Will of God
- II. Jesus Is the Purpose for Doing the Will of God
- III. Jesus Is the Power for Doing the Will of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and find John chapter 17. I want to talk to you tonight about knowing the will of God. I suppose that, if most of us could meet Jesus Christ face-to-face in the flesh and have one question, we would ask Him, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

The same question that the apostle Paul asked when he met Him on the road to Damascus, "Lord, what would You have me to do?"

Now, the most important thing that you could do, that I could do, that anyone else could do, would be to do what God wants us to do. Can you say amen to that? Do what God wants us to do. Nothing else really matters. Now, in order for you to do what God wants you to do, two things are necessary. Number one: You must have a knowledge of what He wants you to do. Number two: You must have the power to do it. Does that make sense? You must know what He wants you to do, and you must have the enablement and the power to do it.

Now, most of us, when we talk about the will of God, want a formula. And I'm not going to give you a formula. I'm going to give you a principle. Now, if you're not willing to do the will of God, most likely you will never know it. On the other hand, if you will apply the principle that I'm going to give you tonight from the Word of God, you probably cannot miss the will of God.

Now, tonight, there are about four categories of persons when it comes to the will of God. Number one: There are those of you who are indifferent. I mean, the message tonight for you would be like pouring water on a rock. You're not really concerned about knowing the will of God. I wish you were. And I hope there's none like that here tonight, but there may be. There may be some listening to the radio who are not really concerned about the will of God. You are indifferent.

Now, there are others who are not indifferent; you're rebellious. You just simply say, "I'm not going to do it. I don't want to know the will of God." That's, perhaps, worse than indifference. It is sheer hostility.

There's a third category of persons. These are those who might want to know the will of God, but they're ignorant. They don't know how to do it. They are floundering around, like a ship without a mast, a sail, a rudder, on a dark and stormy night, and no compass.

But there's a fourth category of persons, and they are those who are victorious. They are finding and doing the will of God, because they have discovered the principle that I want to give you tonight.

Now, John 17, as you know, is the true Lord's Prayer. The prayer that begins, "Our Father," is not the Lord's Prayer. Jesus never prayed that prayer for Himself. Can you imagine Jesus praying, "Father, forgive me my trespasses?" No. That's a prayer. That's a model prayer. That's a prayer for us. In John chapter 17, we find the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is truly the Lord's prayer. Now, in knowing the will of God, we're going to look into this prayer, we're going to eavesdrop on this prayer, and we're going to find three things about knowing the will of God, and they all center in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, don't miss it! It's simple, but if you're not careful, it might be so simple that you may miss it.

Here are the three points of the message tonight. I'll give them to you ahead of time. Jesus Christ is the pattern for knowing the will of God. Jesus Christ is the purpose for doing the will of God. And Jesus is the power for achieving the will of God. It's all centered in the Lord Jesus. He is the pattern, He is the purpose, and He is the power.

I. Jesus Is the Pattern for Knowing the Will of God

Now, I want you to think about Jesus as being the pattern. By the way, look, if you will, in John 17, verse 4—Jesus said to the Father, "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do." How would you like to come to the end of your life, and say, "Father, I glorified You, and Father, I finished the work You gave me to do?" Well, you say, "But, Adrian, that was Jesus." Well, yes, it was Jesus. But now, notice in verse 18: "And as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." He's saying, "I am the pattern. Lord, you sent me. I did what You wanted me to do. And now, Father, as You have sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world."

Now, Jesus lived all of His life by a basic principle. God had a plan for the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ set Himself apart for that plan. Look in verse 19. Now, verse 18 says, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into

the world—now, watch this—and for their sakes I sanctify myself.” Now, what is sanctification? That’s a big double-jointed word. Let me give you some modern words for it, or some plain English for it. To be sanctified is to be set apart for a purpose. Jesus is saying, “I set myself apart, Lord, to do your will. I sanctify myself. I set myself apart to do your will.” Put in your margin Hebrews 10, verses 5 through 7. The Bible speaks of Jesus coming into the world, and here’s what it says of Him: “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body thou hast prepared me.” Now, when it says, “a body thou hast prepared me,” Jesus Christ in the glory had no body. He had to have a body that was prepared. That was the reason for the virgin birth. The body that was formed in the womb of Mary was the body that was prepared for the Son of God who existed in pure spirit to step into flesh: “a body hast thou prepared me. Burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast, thou hast no pleasure.” That is, all of the offerings in the Old Testament were not enough. Continue to read. “Then said I...—now, Jesus is speaking—Then said I, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me—He’s talking about the Old Testament—Then said I, the Lord Jesus, Lo, I come—this is what the Old Testament is all about—to do thy will, O God.” Why did God the Son step out of the glory, take the body that He had prepared in the womb of the Virgin Mary, fulfill the prophecy that was written in the volume of the book, the Old Testament—why? To do the will of the Father. That’s the reason Jesus Christ could say, “I do always those things that please Him.”

One day I was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I was preaching. I visited a bookstore, because I didn’t have anything to read, and I’m miserable if I don’t have anything to read. I visited a bookstore, a Christian bookstore, and I saw there a book written by Major Ian Thomas. I’d never heard of Major Ian Thomas. The book was called, “The Saving Life of Christ.” In my estimation, one of the best books ever written, a transformational book in my own life. I picked it up at random. It looked interesting. I bought it, and I learned so much from that book. Part of the things that I learned I’d never known before. Other things were confirmed and clarified in my heart and in my mind, when I read the book by Major Ian Thomas. I believe our bookstore has it. I recommend it to you. It’s an easy read, a wonderful book: “The Saving Life of Christ,” by Major Ian Thomas. Ian is spelled I-A-N. And a lot of what I’m going to share with you tonight I learned from Major Ian Thomas about doing the will of God.

Now, Major Thomas taught, and I have discovered, the way to know the will of God. How did Jesus know the will of God? Did He reason it out? Did He think it out? No. It came from an intimate relationship with God. Notice verses 20 and 21: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” That is, I’m praying for Steve and Jim, and I’m praying for Mark and Adrian. I’m looking down

through the tunnel of time, and, Father, I'm praying for them. Now, what does He pray? Look in verse 21: "That they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe..."—by the way, that would be a good theme for our World Missions Conference sometimes, "That the world may believe"—"...that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Well, we want the world to believe that God the Father sent God the Son, don't we? Well, Jesus said, "Now, look. I'm praying for these, that they might understand this principle, in order that the world might believe.

Now, how did Jesus sanctify Himself to do the will of God? He set Himself apart to do the will of God. How did He know the will of God? He said, "Well, Lord, You're in me, and I'm in You." And, therefore, the will of God came very naturally to Jesus, because everything He did He did by God the Father directing and guiding His life.

Major Thomas, in that book, said something very interesting. He said, "In the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus did a number of things. For example, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. Again, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Again, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. And again, Jesus spat on the ground, and made mud, and anointed a blind man's eyes with clay and spittle. Then, Major Thomas asked this question: Which of those four things was the most important? Was it the Sermon on the Mount? Was it raising Lazarus from the dead? Was it washing the disciples' feet? Or was it spitting? You know what was his answer? None was more important than the other, because Jesus said, "I do always those things that please Him."

You see, Jesus did not surrender to preach or to spit. He surrendered to God to preach or spit. You say, "You're being foolish." Well, actually, I'm just telling you what I learned from Major Ian Thomas, and it is true. You see, a person who's doing the will of God is just simply available to God to preach the Sermon on the Mount, to shout, and say, "Lazarus, come forth," or to take a towel and wash disciples' feet, or to spit on the ground. You see, the will of God is not a roadmap; it's a relationship. When you're in the will of God, every day is a holy day. Every place is sacred ground. And every deed is a sanctified deed.

Now, what was true about Jesus ought to be true about us. Look again in verse 18: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Now, the problem of many who want to be missionaries is this: they want to be committed to a task. You're not to be committed to a task. Question: Is the tool committed to the task, or is the tool committed to the carpenter? The tool is not to be committed to the task. The tool is to be committed to the carpenter. Friend, we are the tools, and God is the craftsman. The Bible says we are His workmanship, and He is the craftsman. Now, so many of us want to surrender to a task, or we want to surrender to a field. No.

Sometimes in mission meetings, we hear this: the need is the call. Have you ever heard that? Go to enough mission meetings, you will. Well, frankly, that's foolish. Why? Because there are thousands of needs. You want to get frustrated? Get that in your mind that says the need is the call. Then you're going to be like a man who got on a horse and rode off in all directions. No. You're not committed to a task, and you are not committed to a place; you're committed to a person whose name is Jesus. Just as Jesus Christ was committed to the Father, and said, "I do always those things that please Him," you are to be committed to Jesus Christ. And when you are to Jesus Christ what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus Christ will be to you what the Father was to Him, guiding and directing your footsteps.

You think of the blunders that people have made who have been committed to a task rather than committed to God. For example, Moses—Moses got himself committed to a task. He started out to be a missionary, and ended up a murderer. He killed an Egyptian. He made a terrible blunder, because he was committed to a task; and he was out of the will of God, because he was not walking in the Spirit.

Abraham and Sarah got committed to a task rather than to God. And so, their heir did not come as they thought. They wanted to hurry the hand of God. Abraham and Sarah had a committee meeting, and they made a plan. They produced, with Sarah's handmaid, and Abraham's cooperation, Ishmael. Ishmael was not God's plan. Isaac was God's plan. For 15 years, Abraham tried to extract a blessing out of Ishmael rather than listening to God. Now, listen to me. The only explanation for Ishmael was Abraham. The only explanation for Isaac was God. There's a difference. When we get committed to a task, we take things in our hands.

Do you know how a fanatic becomes a fanatic? And, by the way, religious fanatics always bother me. A fanatic is somebody committed to a task rather than somebody committed to the Lord, and he becomes fanatical about it. He's committed to a cause rather than God.

Now, knowing the will of God, Jesus is the pattern. He says, "As you, Father, have sent me, even so sent I them." If you want to know the will of God for your life, find out how Jesus did the will of God for His life, because as the Father sent Him, He sends you.

II. Jesus Is the Purpose for Doing the Will of God

Now, secondly, not only is Jesus the pattern, but Jesus is the purpose for serving the Lord in missions. Look again in verses 18 and 19: "Even as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Now, what is, sanctification? It's

being set aside for a purpose. Jesus set Himself aside for the purpose of the Father.

Now, what is the purpose of the Father? Well, look in verses 21 and 22: “That they all might be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also, might be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” What is the purpose of all missions? That the world might believe that God sent His Son. That’s the purpose of missions. Now, listen. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” That’s the purpose. Why are we set aside? That the world may believe in Jesus, and that the world may see His glory.

Now, what is that glory? Well, Jesus was the glory of God. The apostle John said in the earlier chapters, “We beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Now, when people look at me, they’re to see the glory of God. They’re to see the glory of God. When you go to school tomorrow, when you go into your office tomorrow, when you walk the streets, when you’re on the ball field, they are to see in you the glory of God. Notice verse 22: “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them...” What was His purpose? That the world may believe that You’ve sent Me. “And, Lord, as You sent me, even so send I them.” “Lord, I want them to see in me Your glory.” That’s what the Master said. And then, He says, “And I pray for those whom you’ve given me, that when people see them, they may see Your glory. My glory will be made manifest in them. Look in verse 23: “I in them, and thou in me,”—isn’t that beautiful?—“that they may be made perfect in me,”—the word perfect there means mature, or they may be made perfect in one—“and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

Wouldn’t you like for somebody to look at you, and say, “Boy, God really must love her; God really must love her; look at the glory in her life”? That the world can look at us and see the glory of God.

Do you know what sin is? Sin is coming short of the glory of God. That’s what sin is. It’s just simply coming short of the glory of God. I’m saying that Jesus is the pattern for doing the will of God. Jesus is the purpose for doing the will of God, that the world may see Christ in us.

Rachel, if you had ransacked all the songbooks in the world, you could not have found a better appointed and anointed song to sing than the one you sang tonight: “We are the only Jesus that this world will see.” You see, when He came here the first time, He was in His Bethlehem body—“a body thou hast prepared me.” Now, He’s in His Pentecostal body. You want to see the body of Christ? Look around. We are the body of Christ. And we are the visible part of the invisible Jesus, and Jesus is the invisible part of the visible church. He, Jesus, is the pattern—“as you’ve sent me, even so sent I

them.” Jesus is the purpose—that in us the world might see the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Jesus Is the Power for Doing the Will of God

Now, thirdly, finally, Jesus is the power for doing the will of God. You see, I said, earlier it’s not enough to know the will of God. You think, if you knew the will of God, that would be it? Oh, when you see the will of God, then there comes that feeling of inadequacy unless you know the rest of it. The same God who calls you is the God who enables you and will lead you. Look now in verse 23, and see this: He’s also the power. “I in them, and thou in me.”

What is the will of God for you? What is the will of God for me? It is letting Jesus live His life through me and then get the glory to Himself. That’s the will of God. Letting Jesus just live His life through you in such a way that God gets the glory. That’s the reason I said to you, and to myself also, that the will of God is not a formula. It is not a roadmap. It is a relationship. Now, put, as an ancillary verse, in your margin, 1 Corinthians 12, beginning in verse 12: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” Now, I’m just one body, but I have many members. I have eyes and ears and hands and feet, mouth, nose, liver, lungs, spleen, whatever. I think I’ve got all that. Now, just one body; many members. Now, he says, “so also is Christ.” That is, the body of Christ here on this earth, speaking of Bellevue, or any New Testament church. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” And, by the way, you know, that’s what makes Bellevue Bellevue. People come here. They just don’t understand this church. They say, “These folks don’t even know one another.” No, but I’ll tell you there’s one that we all know, and His name is Jesus. And the Jesus in me is the Jesus in you. And the Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you, for by one Spirit we’ve been baptized into one body. That’s what makes us one.

Now, He’s the head. We’re members one of another: “into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have all, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” You see, by the Holy Spirit, you and I share the life of Jesus Christ. That’s what He meant in verse 23, when He said, “I in them.” When you get saved, you’re baptized into the body of Christ, not by water, but by the Holy Spirit. You become a member of the body of Christ, a member of His body. Now, before Pentecost, I’ve told you, He only had one body, a Bethlehem body. Now, He has a Pentecostal body.

Now, let’s take the analogy. Look up here. See my hand. By the way, take your hand, and hold it up. All right, look at it. Now, watch me. Touch your chin. No, I said, touch your chin. You all touched your cheek just because I touched my cheek. You

need to listen more carefully. That was dirty. All right now, that was fun. All right, what is my will for my hand? What is my will for my hand? I'll tell you what my will for my hand is. It's me. I am my will for my hand. My head is my will for my hand. I don't want my hand to have a will of its own. I want my hand to be available. And I don't want my hand to do things for me. That's dangerous. I'd wake up in the morning: "Good morning, Mr. Rogers. Today I'm going to shave you with a very sharp instrument. I'm going to stick some stuff in your mouth. I am going to put my finger in your ear. I'm going to write some letters." I say, "Well, who you going to write to? I mean, what are you going to say? I may not like it. I may not like what you're putting in my mouth. You might cut me with that razor. I don't want you to do things for me." What is my will for my hand? It is me.

What is God's will for you? Jesus. He's the head, isn't He? It's Jesus. You just stay connected to Jesus. You just be there abiding in Jesus. Isn't that what Jesus said He did? He set Himself apart to do the will of God. "I in me, and He in me." Whatever He says, whatever I hear, that's what I say. Whatever He says, that is what I do. Now, suppose my will for my hand is to write a letter. Now, if my will for my hand is to write a letter, my hand ought to know that, if it's my will for my hand to write a letter, then somehow I have to get some paper for my hand, and I have to get a pen for my hand. Now, friend, if God has a will for you, God also is able to supply your need. Did you know that? I mean, God's not going to tell you to write a letter, and not give you any paper, or not give you a pen. You see, the God who wants it done is the God who enables us to do it. When we get in the stream of His will, and we say, "Well, God wants me to do so and so, but I don't have the resources," there's something wrong there—there's something wrong there.

I told you about a preacher one time. I met a preacher boy, a embryonic theologian. He said to me, "God wants me to go to seminary, but I don't have the money." I said, "Oh." I said, "Well, if I could get a millionaire to underwrite you, would you go?" He said, "Man, would I." I said, "Well, you have the one who owns the world." Now, God may use a millionaire, but His source is not some millionaire, not some man. I'm telling you, if God wants my hand to write a letter, God has got to say, "Now, here's a pen, and here's some paper." I mean, if I do that, then I have to say, "Here's a pen; here's some paper."

So what am I saying? I'm saying that, for knowing the will of God, Jesus Christ is the pattern: "as my Father has sent me, even though send I you." Jesus Christ is the purpose: that the world might believe in Him, that the world might see the glory of God in us, and believe in Jesus Christ. And He is the power. He's the one who's going to energize and sustain us.

Now, as Major Thomas said, "My responsibility is my response to His ability, whether

it's to preach or spit." Whatever. To do as Jesus said: "I do always those things that please Him." Now, if that is true, there's only one reasonable thing to do. You know what the one reasonable thing to do is? I'll give it to you—Romans 12, verses 1 and 2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." I mean, if Jesus Christ died for you, if He loves you, you say, "Here, Lord." Just as Jesus said, "A body thou hast prepared me; I come to do thy will, O God." Now, Paul says, "You present your bodies a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Don't present yourself to a need. Don't present yourself to a field. Present yourself to Jesus Christ. Yes, there will be a field. Yes, there will be a ministry. Yes, there will be place. But that's not your primary concern. When you present yourself to Him, then your mind will be transformed. The Bible says, "this is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The renewing of your mind will transform you. You will find yourself, then, thinking God's thoughts after Him, and you will prove experientially that His will is good and perfect.

God has a purpose for you, as He had a purpose for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2, verse 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Now, you know what that means—"God has before ordained?" Did you know that God has a plan for you, God has a work for you to finish? There's been a story written for you. How would you like to come to the end of the trail, and say, "Father, I've finished the work You gave me to do"? Wouldn't that be great—"I've finished the work You gave me to do"? You have but one responsibility, and that is to trust in the Lord with all your heart. "Lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." Just as a bird is directed in migration, the Holy Spirit of God will be in you what instinct is to the animals. Friend, you don't find the will of God; the will of God finds you.

Conclusion

Now, listen. If He promised to save me, I can commit myself to Him, and thank Him by faith. If He promised to guide me, I can commit myself to Him, and thank Him in the same way. Are you committed to Him? Then, as Major Thomas says, just thank Him. Just say, "Thank You, Lord. I am going to be to You, Lord Jesus, what You were to the Father. And, Lord Jesus, You will be to me what the Father was to You. I don't know what it's going to be, Lord, but I know it's going to be exciting."

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed. Here's the question I ask: Is all there is of you committed to all you know of Him? If that is so, that is the will of

God for you. It may work out in many different ways, but the will of God for you is all you know of you, committed to all you know of Him. If this is true of you, you cannot miss God's will. If you don't do this, I doubt that you will ever know it. And don't be afraid to do it.

Father God, I've certainly spoken to my own heart tonight. And I pray, dear God, that You will teach me these things that I am still learning. And, Lord, I want to be like the Lord Jesus, and say, "I come to do Your will." And, Lord, as Jesus, my Lord and Master, sanctified Himself to do Your will, I set myself apart, and we do—I believe many of us—to do Your will, O God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Heartbeat of Our Mission

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 27, 1994

Main Scripture Text: John 17:4

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

JOHN 17:4

Outline

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Introduction

I want to entitle this message, “The Heartbeat of our Mission,” because that is exactly, precisely, in one sentence, what I’m trying to say tonight.

Would you take God’s Word and turn to John chapter 17 and verse 4. These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Christ is praying a great high priestly prayer at the close of His ministry here on earth, and this is what He says. And listen to it. John 17 and verse 4: “I have glorified thee on the earth...” And, by the way, isn’t that what we’re here to do? “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

Now the most important thing that you could ever do is to do the work that God gave you to do. And what a wonderful thing it would be if you could come to the end of your life and say, “God, I glorified You, and, number two, I finished the work that You gave me to do.” Wouldn’t that be great? Now, friend, that is success. Nothing else—I don’t care how much fame you have, how much money you make, how much ease you live in, how many people love you and praise you and adore you—if you cannot say, “Lord, I have glorified You, and, God, I finished the work that You gave me to do,” your work

has been an abject failure. But, on the other hand, if you can say, “Lord, I’ve glorified You, and, Lord, I finished the work that You gave me to do,” you have been a rip roaring success, no matter what anybody else thinks of you. Is that not true? You know that is true.

I. Six Myths Concerning the Will of God

Now, therefore, I want to talk to you about how to get the heartbeat of your mission. And I want to remind you of something that I have told you before. There are six real myths concerning the will of God.

A. Myth #1: God Is Going to Give You a Road Map or a Formula to Know His Will

Number one is that God’s going to give you a roadmap or some formula to know the will of God. He will not. God is not going to say, “Now, next week at thus and such a time you’re to do this, and a month from now you’re to do thus and such. A year from now you’re to do this,” and so forth. God doesn’t do that, and I’m glad He does not because that would take the romance out of it and it would take the necessity for you to lean upon Him moment by moment out of it. God is not going to guide you with a map. God’s not going to give you a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That is, it is not a roadmap, but a relationship.

B. Myth #2: If You Do God’s Will, You’re Going to Be Unhappy

Here’s another myth concerning the will of God for your life. That if you do the will of God for your life, you’re going to be unhappy. God is not a killjoy. Those people who have the deepest joy are those who have that assurance and they’re in the center of God’s will, whether it is in Memphis, Tennessee or Tanzania or wherever it may be, that God gives joy to those who are in His will. He is our loving Father. The greatest joy, the sweetest joy is not doing what you want, but doing what He wants.

C. Myth #3: God Only Has a Plan for a Certain Class of People

Now here’s a third myth. That God only speaks to a certain class of people or that God only has a plan for certain class of people—like these folks up here. Do you think these folks are different than you? No! God certainly has a plan for the pastor. God has a plan for the missionary. God has a plan for the minister of music. God has a plan for these people. But God also has a plan for the plumber and the lawyer and the electrician and the stenographer. God has a plan for everybody. If you’re saved, God has a plan for your life. And so, whether you’re a missionary or a secretary, there is a plan for your life. God doesn’t speak to just a certain class of person.

D. Myth #4: To Know God's Will, You've Got to Have Some Radical, Dramatic Experience

Another myth is that somehow you've got to have some radical, dramatic experience, that God is going to zap you somehow, that you're going to have a vision, or that you're going to have a Damascus Road experience like the Apostle Paul had. You may have one like that, but that is not normal. That is unusual. And so many times, God does not speak in the earthquake, the wind, and the fire, but God speaks in that small, still, small voice.

E. Myth #5: It Is Only Young People Who Need to Find God's Will for Their Life

Another myth, and this is a big one: that it is the young people who need to find the will of God for their life. The old coots don't have to worry about it. Let me tell you something, friend. God has a will for everybody's life at every age. And if God called you to be a missionary when you were 15, 20, and you missed it, and now you're 80, and you say, "Well, this sermon's for somebody else," you're wrong. You take those years that you have remaining and give them to God and get in the stream of His will. And God is a good God, and God will restore the years that the locust has eaten.

F. Myth #6: God Hides His Will from Us

Another myth is that God hides His will from us, kind of like an Easter egg hunt, and God says, "There's something I want you to do, but I'm not going to tell you what it is," and, therefore, it's up to you to discover the will of God for your life. No, no. These are all myths concerning the will of God.

Let me say that there are four categories of persons here tonight. Listen to me. There are those who are indifferent to God's will and you've already tuned me out. You won't find God's will. And there are those who are antagonistic to God's will. You don't want to know God's will. You're rebellious. Well, you won't find it either. Then there are those who are ignorant of how to know God's will. And it's a pity, but these may miss God's will. But then there's a fourth category of persons tonight, and they're going to discover the principle that's here in John chapter 17. And beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, if they will put this principle into practice, they cannot miss the will of God. So I want us to find out what that principle is.

II. God's Will for Us Is Sanctification

Look now in John chapter 17, verse 4. Jesus said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Well, you say, that was Jesus. Yes, it was Jesus. But now skip on to verse 17. Jesus is praying for us, and this is what He prays for us: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth—now watch this: As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Now Jesus

said, “Look, Father, I’ve finished the work that You gave me to do.” And then He said, “Lord, just as You gave me a work to do, now I’m giving them a work to do. As You sent me, I send them.” So what is true of Jesus is, correspondingly, true of you in doing the will of God, for He said in the same manner, “Lord, as You sent me, I also have sent them into the world.” Into all the world for Jesus’ sake, as Randy sang, whether it’s here, across the street, or around the world. “And for their sakes—now watch this—here’s a religious word—I sanctify myself...”—now, don’t tune that word out because that’s the key word—“...I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their name, through their word.” So He says, “Not only am I praying for Peter and, and James and John and Matthew and Bartholomew and Philip. I’m praying for Adrian, and Bob, and Jim, and Russell, and Betty. I am praying for Buna. I’m praying for those who will believe on me through their word.” Here’s a prayer with a delayed detonation on it. I mean, He just launched a prayer missile with a delayed detonation. And He’s praying for all of us. Isn’t that wonderful that Jesus prayed for us here and He continues to pray for us?

Now what does He pray? Well, He prays, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us—now here it is—that the world may believe...” That’s what we’re about this week: “...that the world may believe...” This is a World Missions prayer: “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

Now Jesus knew that God had a plan for His life. Jesus knew that. As a matter of fact, Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 7 speaks prophetically of a prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ, and here’s what it says in Hebrews 10, verse 7: “Then said I...—now Jesus is speaking—Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God...” Now I read the sentence without the parenthesis in it. Now let me read it with the parenthesis in it. “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.” In the volume of the book it is written in me, of me is in parenthesis, so the sentence says, “...Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” That’s why Jesus came. But then He said, parenthetically, “...in the volume of the book it is written of me.” Now, Jesus said, “There’s a story already written about Me before I was born. It was in the Old Testament. In, in the volume of the book.” He was talking about the Bible. “It was written of Me. Father, You had a plan for Me. There was a plan scripted for Me before I ever got here. Now, Lord, I have come to do the work, to finish the work that You gave for me. There’s a story already written.” And then He said, “Lord, You gave Me a body. You put Me here on earth. “A body thou hast given me, and now, Lord, I come to do thy will.” And then after He’d lived here on earth, He said, “I’ve finished the work You gave me to do.” That’s wonderful, isn’t it? That’s wonderful. “I have finished, I have played out exactly the script that was written for Me in the Old Testament.” And Jesus did it

perfectly. While Jesus was here on earth, He said, “I do always those things that please Him, please My Father.” Now, you say, “Well, that was Jesus.” Right! Right! But now go back to verse 17. He says, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” Now Jesus said, “Look. I have set Myself aside to do what God wants Me to do.” And that’s that religious word again, sanctification. Look in verse 19: “For their sakes—or your sake and my sake, Jesus said—I sanctify Myself.” Now sanctification does not mean to get where you can’t sin anymore. If that’s so, Jesus had to get where He didn’t sin anymore, see. That isn’t what sanctification means. Jesus said, “I sanctify Myself.” Some people think, well, when you get sanctified, then you don’t sin anymore. Jesus didn’t have to get to the place where He didn’t sin anymore because He never did sin, isn’t that right? The word sanctify means “to be set aside for a special purpose,” to be set aside for a special purpose, a holy purpose. Jesus said, “Look. I sanctify Myself. I set Myself aside to do the will of God, to finish the work that God gave Me to do. I just sanctify Myself. I set Myself aside to do that work.” Now look at that. He says in verse 18: “And as thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world; and for their sakes I sanctify Myself—now watch it—that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” “I set Myself apart to do the Father’s will. And just as I set Myself apart to do the Father’s will, dedicate, consecrate My life to His will, so, Father, as You have sent me, I send them, and they need to set themselves apart the same way.” Now look in verse 21. He says, “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in Me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us—one, in us, one in us. Just like, Father, I dwell in You and You dwell in Me. Father, I want them to dwell in Me. And I will dwell in them—now watch it—that the world may believe.” Here’s the key to world missions right here. “. . .I in them, they in Me, they set aside for this special purpose, that the world may believe.”

One of my favorite Bible teachers is Major Ian Thomas. And many of you have heard Major Thomas. What a uniquely gifted man. How wise he is. Sometimes humorous because he makes us laugh at ourselves. But Ian Thomas one time, when I heard him preach, asked this question: He said which of these episodes was the most spiritual in the life of Christ? When was Jesus the most spiritual? When He was preaching the Sermon on the Mount, was that when He was the most spiritual? Or was He the most spiritual when He was raising Lazarus from the dead? Or was He the most spiritual when He washed His disciples’ feet? Or was He the most spiritual when He spat on the ground and made clay to anoint a blind man’s eyes? Which was the most spiritual? Well, you, you could, you couldn’t say, could you? You could not say that it, it was more spiritual to preach than to spit. Now I’m, I’m not being lighthearted now. I want you to listen very carefully. What did Jesus say? Jesus said, “I do always those things that please Him, always.” So everything He did was the most spiritual. Everything He did

was in the will of God. You see, as Major Thomas so wisely points out, Jesus did not surrender to preach or to spit; He surrendered to God. He surrendered to God. He just set Himself apart for God. He said, “God, I am available. If You want Me to preach, I’ll preach. If You want Me to shout at Lazarus’ tomb, I’ll shout. If You want Me to wash disciples’ feet, I’ll wash disciples’ feet. If You want Me to spit on the ground, I will spit on the ground.” The will of God for your life is not a roadmap; it is a relationship—you in Him, and He in you, that the world may know.

Now the same thing that was true about Jesus and His relationship to the Father is to be true about you and your relationship to Jesus. And when you’re prepared to be to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus is prepared to be to you what the Father was to Him. You didn’t get it, cause you would have said amen. When you are prepared to be to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus is prepared to be to you what the Father was to Him. Good, you got it. Now listen. It is a relationship. Jesus said, “...that the world may know.” Question: Is a tool committed to the job or is the tool committed to the carpenter? See. So many of us want to be committed to the job. We’re not to be committed to the job. We’re to be committed to the Lord, just like the tool is to be committed to the carpenter and the carpenter is committed to the task. We are the tools and Jesus is still the carpenter, and we are to be committed to Him. The reason that so many people don’t find the will of God or mess up is they get committed to a task rather than to the Lord, or they get committed to a field rather than to the Lord. So many times, a person will preach a missionary message. They will tell you about the vast need in some field, and then say, “Don’t you see that need? Don’t you see that need?” The need is the call. And so people dewy-eyed come forward and commit themselves to a need. Well, the problem is, if you get committed to a need, you’re going to be frustrated all your life because there are needs everywhere. How are you going to know which is the greatest need? One need will supersede another need, and another need will supersede that need, and, and you’re going to be committed to a task, and you’re going to be committed to a field rather than being committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. There are thousands of needs. And as you study the Bible, you’re going to find out that a lot of erstwhile servants of the Lord made some blunders by being committed to needs and being committed to programs rather than being committed to the Lord.

I think of Moses. God wanted Moses to serve Him, but Moses somehow got committed to the need, to the task. He started out to be a missionary, became a murderer. People turned on him. He saw two of his people striving together, and tried to break up a fight, and ended up killing an Egyptian and buried him. But the winds of God’s providence uncovered the works of Moses’ flesh, and Moses was discovered, and everybody turned on him. The whole thing seemed to go downhill. Moses couldn’t understand it. He said, “I thought they knew that by my right arm I was supposed to

deliver them.” You see, Moses was trusting in himself and committed to a cause rather than abiding in the Lord.

I think about Abraham and Sarah. They got all committed to a need. They all got committed to a task rather than committed to the Lord. The Lord had a plan; that is, that Isaac was to be born, and God wanted to give a son who would be the son of promise. But they couldn’t see how it was going to happen, so they had a committee meeting—Abraham and Sarah did—and they cooped into that committee meeting an Egyptian woman named Haggai. And Abraham, with his own mind, conceived a plan, and Sarah’s compliance, went in and cohabited with Haggai and brought forth a son whose name was Ishmael. That was the work of his flesh. For fifteen years Abraham tried to extract a blessing out of Ishmael and it couldn’t be done. And then he did it God’s way and Isaac was born. Now listen. The only explanation for Ishmael was Abraham. The only explanation for Isaac was God. Abraham did it his way and then he did it God’s way.

Do you know what a fanatic is? A fanatic is someone who is committed to a cause or somebody who’s committed to a purpose rather than somebody who is committed to God.

Now what is sanctification? Look again in verse 19. Jesus said, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself...” Now what is sanctification? Sanctification is to be set aside for an intelligent purpose. Jesus set Himself aside to do the will of God. And we’re to do exactly the same thing.

Jesus set Himself aside to do the will of God. And we’re to do exactly the same thing. Now, look in verses 21 and 22 again. Jesus said, “I do this that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us—now watch it—that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest Me I have given them...” Now, what was this glory? What was the glory that the Father gave Jesus? Well, it was in Him the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. It was the presence of God in His life. That was the glory. It was the Father’s likeness. You could look at Jesus and see God. Jesus said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” Now Jesus said, “The glory that You gave Me I’m going to give them...” Do you know what a Christian is supposed to be? Someone you can look at and see Jesus. You’re to see Jesus. As He inhabits our humanity, we are to display His glory. And as we display His glory as He is made manifest, as He is made manifest, the world will believe. The world will believe when they see Jesus Christ in us. Not our sermons, not our good deeds—it is Jesus Christ. We need to manifest the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look in verse 23: “I in them, and thou in Me—God the Father in Jesus, and Jesus in Adrian—that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know, that the world may know that thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved Me.” By the way, that would be a good theme for a World Missions Conference—“That the World

May Know.”

What is the will of God for your life, therefore? I told you tonight. I can tell you beyond the shadow of any doubt that if you will learn what I'm going to tell you, you can't miss it. And if you don't learn what I'm going to tell you, you can't have it. What is the will of God for your life? I'm going to change it from what to a person pronoun—Who is the will of God for your life? His name is Jesus. Now you say, “Well, that, that doesn't make sense. That doesn't make sense. That's, that's, religious mumbo-jumbo.” No. Just stayed tuned. Now we're almost finished.

Jesus Christ is the will of God for your life. You set yourself apart for Him. You give your life to Him. The will of God for your life is Jesus living His life through you. Why don't you write it on a piece of paper? The will of God for my life is Jesus living His life through me. The will of God for my life is Jesus living His life through me. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else: that is the will of God for your life.

Paul told us in 1 Corinthians that we are now the body of Christ. And he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verses 12 and 13: “For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” What is he talking about? By the Holy Spirit of God we share the life of Jesus Christ. Now when Jesus came at Bethlehem, He had one body. That was His Bethlehem body. But now on the Day of Pentecost, He gets a new body, a mystical body, and now there are 120 members in that body, 120 pairs of eyes. And then soon that body became 3,120 plus the women and children, 3,120 eyes, 3,120 pairs of eyes and pairs of hands and pairs of feet. We are the body of Christ.

Now, Jesus lives in you like my spirit, my human spirit, lives in me. Now, we are members of His body. Look at my hand there. What is the will of Adrian for this hand? Want me to tell you? Adrian, Adrian. What is the plan for this hand? Adrian. I don't want this plan, this hand to have any plans of its own. What is the plan for that hand? It's Adrian. What is the plan for your life? Jesus, Jesus. “Father, You in Me, and I in You; they in Me, I in them, that the world may know.”

The will of God for your life is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now, the will for my hand is myself. The will of God for your life is Jesus Christ. If I want to write a sermon or write a letter, I want my hand to be there available to me. That's all. Now, I just want it to hold a pen and move at the impulse of the head. Now, you say, “What if my hand is supposed to write a letter and it doesn't have any paper to write on, whose problem is that?” It is not the hand's problem; it's the head's problem, isn't it? I mean, if my head wants my hand to write a letter, don't you think that my head ought to have enough sense to know my hand has to have some paper? If God has a plan for your life, don't

you think that God knows how to supply the need to get your plan done and to meet your needs if you're available to Him? If you need a pen, don't you think that God has enough intelligent, or don't you think I have enough intelligence, if my hand needs a pen, to tell my arm to reach out and get it? What is my will for my hand? It is me. What is God's will for you? Jesus. As you set yourself aside and you say, "Lord, I am here to do Your will." You say, "But Jesus had a plan for Him. You told us about that Old Testament story." Well, God has a plan for you. "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. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus—now listen—unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." That's Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10. Just as God foreordained a plan for the Lord Jesus Christ, He has foreordained a plan for you. And your duty and your joy is simply to be available, to be available. As Dr. Ian Thomas would say, "To preach or to spit." Which is more important—Adrian preaching or you in your office tomorrow? "Oh," you say, "well, preaching the gospel's a lot more important than what I do." If you're in the will of God tomorrow in that office, you couldn't possibly do anything more important than what I'm doing right now because there's nothing more important than the will of God. What is more important—the Sermon on the Mount, raising Lazarus from the dead, washing the disciples' feet, or spitting? Jesus said, "I do always those things that please Him."

You see, listen. Your job is only to be available to Him, whether you're a dentist, an engineer, a housewife. None are superior. The Bible says, "He hath set every member in the body as it hath pleased Him." It is simply the will of God. So, what is your joy, duty, and privilege? Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice..." You just present yourself to Him. Don't present yourself to a need. Don't present yourself to a field or to a ministry, but to God. Of course, there's going to be a field. Of course, there's going to be a ministry. Of course, God's going to put some of you overseas. But that is not your prime concern. When you present yourself to Him a living sacrifice, and you're not conformed to this world, you will be transformed, metamorphosed by the renewing of your mind, and you will know what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God because you will now have a renewed mind, the mind of Christ, and that mind will think. And you won't find the will of God; the will of God will find you. You will prove experientially what is that good and perfect and holy will of God. God has a purpose for you. You have one responsibility. Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path." You'll find yourself walking in the stream of the Spirit, thinking His thoughts. And the will of God will guide you like instinct guides the birds on their migratory paths. Did you know that the Holy Spirit of God will be to you what instinct is to the animals?

Conclusion

Now, yes, oh, yes, there are many practical things. There are many sermons on how to know the will of God—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Do I go here? Go there? Which college? Which field? All of those have their significance, but none of them will even begin to work until you simply do what Jesus has taught you to do right here and say, “Lord, Your will for my life is You. I set myself aside. I sanctify myself, Lord, just as You sanctified Yourself, to do Your will, O God.” If you don’t do this, you’ll never know the will of God. And if you do it, you can’t possibly miss it. Let’s bow in prayer.

Now the question is, is all there is of you committed and surrendered to all there is of Him? That’s a big question. Is all there is of you committed to all there is of Him? Maybe that God’s plan for you is to be a homemaker and a mother. It maybe that it’s to be a pioneer missionary. But nothing takes precedence or supersedes just simply the commitment to Him.

The choir is going to sing for us. And while the choir sings, I want you to stay there seated, if you will. And, the choir is going to sing, “Wherever He Leads, I’ll Go.” And what you’re saying is, “Lord, I am being committed to You, not to a field, not to a need, not to a cause, but I’m giving all there is of me to all there is of You in a new and a living way.” If you’d like to do that tonight, I want you to symbolize it by coming and finding a place there at this altar and just kneeling. Then we’re going to pray a prayer of dedication. But before we do that, I want to say also, if you’re here tonight and you know that God has especially told you to go to thus-and-such a place, especially called you to thus-and-such a field, while you’re committed to Jesus you know that’s your calling, you want this church to especially pray for you and to guide you, I want you to come to one of the ministers standing there and tell him that God has called you to do thus and such, as you know your heart. Tonight, if you’re not saved, and you want to be saved, I want you to come to one of these ministers and tell him, “I need Jesus. I need to be saved.” And we’ll take an open Bible and lead you to Jesus and you can be saved tonight. If you need to put your church membership here; you believe as we believe and want to be a faithful member of this church, you need to come to one of these ministers who’ll be standing here at the front and tell him that you want to place your membership here. But if you just want to come tonight and say, “Lord, I am setting myself aside, that the will for my life—I don’t know what else it is—but I know tonight it’s Jesus. And I’m going to let Him be to me what the Father was to Him, because I’m going to be to Him what He was to the Father.” Just come and kneel and pray and then we’re going to have a prayer of dedication. And I’m going to ask you to get up out of your seat and come, and just ask the person who’s sitting there praying just to excuse you as you slip out and come. Choir, you sing while these are coming.

Knowing the Will of God for Missionary Service

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 28, 1999

Main Scripture Text: John 17:4, 17–23

*“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”
John 17:18*

Outline

Introduction

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Introduction

Would you turn to John chapter 17? And, when you’ve found it, just look up here for a moment—John chapter 17. We’re going to talk tonight about knowing the will of God for missionary service, and you’re going to find out that God has a purpose and a plan for your life that is absolutely unique for you. He has as many plans as He has people here tonight. Read with me John chapter 17 and verse 4. Jesus is praying, and here’s what He says to the Father: *“I have glorified thee on the earth”*—now, watch this—*“I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* (John 17:4) Now, just underscore that. Jesus said, “Father, You gave me a job, and I did it. I finished it. I have completed it”—*“I have finished the work [that] thou [hast given] me to do.”* (John 17:4) That’s verse 4. Now, look down at verse 18, if you will. Jesus then said, *“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”* (John 17:18) He’s talking about His disciples. He said, “Father, you gave me a job to do. I did it. And now, Lord, as you have sent me, these, my disciples, Lord, I’m sending.”

You know the most important thing that could be put on your epitaph when they...when you die? It could be this: “He did the job God called him to do”—“He finished the job.” Nothing else matters but that you do what God has called you to do. Now, in order to do what God has called you to do, the job that God has given you—because Jesus said, *“I have finished the work [you gave] me,”* (John 17:4) and then He

says, “As you sent me, I’m sending them” (John 17:18)—in order for you, therefore, to do the job that God has sent you to do, two things are necessary: number one, you have to know what it is; number two, you have to have the power to do it. Isn’t that true? You have to know what it is He wants you to do, and knowing it is not enough; you also have to have the divine energy, the power, the impetus to get that job done.

Now, when it comes to knowing the will of God, many people want a formula. I’m not here tonight to give you a formula; I’m here tonight to give you a principle. And, if you’ll learn that principle tonight, you will know the will of God. If you will apply the principle that I’m going to give you tonight—now, when I say, “I’m doing it,” I’m just simply sharing with you what the Lord has given in His Word, I truly believe—if you will apply this principle that God has given us—let us put it this way—you cannot miss the will of God. I’m absolutely, totally confident of this: if you will apply this principle, you cannot miss the will of God. If you are unable to do so, you will never know the will of God. Now, in order to do the will of God, you must know it.

There are four kinds of people here tonight who are in this auditorium and in our radio audience tonight. There are those who are indifferent to the will of God. You have a ho-hum Christianity. You maybe are not even carefully listening tonight. You will not know the will of God because of your indifference. That’s one category. There is another category: these are not indifferent; these are rebellious. They have set themselves against God, and they will not know the will of God because they don’t want to know it. They’re willingly ignorant. There is a third category of persons here tonight, and these are they who are ignorant of the will of God, and they will not know the will of God because they will not practice the principle that we’re going to be talking about. And then, the last category of persons who are here tonight are those who are victorious—those who have discovered and are putting into practice the principle that I’m going to give you tonight from the Word of God.

All right, are you ready for the principle? How can you know the will of God for your life? Now, when I tell you the principle, at first, it’s going to sound simplistic, it’s going to sound absurd, and you’re going to say, “Well, now wait a minute. I was looking for something a little more complex.” It—what I’m going to tell you tonight—is so simple I’m almost ashamed to tell you, but it is gloriously simple and it is simply glorious. Now, it may not make sense when I tell you to begin with, but here it is. And, don’t pass this off, and don’t think this is a simplistic statement when I say it: Jesus is the will of God for you. Now, you say, “Now, that sounds too religious for me, and I can’t get my teeth into it.” Well, just stay with me. Jesus is the will of God for you. You’re going to find out that Jesus is the pattern, the purpose, and the power for God’s will in your life. Keep that in mind: Jesus is the pattern, Jesus is the purpose, and Jesus is the power. Now, keep this principle in mind. It is a principle.

I. Jesus Is the Pattern

Now, first of all, I want you to see that Jesus is the pattern. Look, if you will, in verses 17 through 21. We're in John 17. Begin in verse 17. Jesus is praying for us and all of His disciples, and He says, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"*—now, watch this—*"As thou hast sent me"*—*"as thou hast sent me"*—*"into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone"*—that is, Peter, James, and John—*"but for them also which shall believe on me"*—Jim, Adrian, and Bob and Phil—*"through their word; That they...may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they...may"*—*"that they also may"*—*"be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* (John 17:17–21) Friend, this is missionary stuff we're getting: *"that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* (John 17:21) Now, go up. Here is the key. Look at it in verse 18: *"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so"*—in the same way—*"have I also sent them into the world."* (John 17:18) Now, Jesus is the pattern—Jesus is the pattern. Can you see that? *"Father, as you've sent me, I've sent them."* (John 17:18)

Now, let's find out how Jesus did what He did. How could Jesus come to the place at the climax of His ministry and say, *"Father, I have finished the work you gave me to do"*? Well, we're going to look at it right now and see the basic principle, and it is this: that Jesus sanctified Himself. Now, what does it mean to sanctify yourself? Some people believe that you come to the place when you're sanctified where you no longer sin. Well, Jesus never did sin, so He didn't have to sanctify Himself so He no longer sinned. That's not what it's talking about. To be sanctified is to be set apart for a purpose—to be set aside, to be set apart for a purpose. Jesus simply sanctified Himself. He set Himself aside for a purpose, and that purpose was the will of God.

Now, put down an ancillary passage of Scripture here in Hebrews chapter 10—just write it down. I'll share it with you, but I want you to keep it in your notes—Hebrews chapter 10, verses 5 through 7. And, it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and here's what it says about Him: *"Wherefore when he cometh into the world"*—that is, when Jesus left heaven and came to earth—*"he saith, Sacrifice and [offerings] thou wouldest not, but a body...thou [hast] prepared me"*—who prepared Jesus' body? The Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. His body was a divinely prepared, crafted instrument to do the will of God—*"a body...thou [hast] prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast...no pleasure"*—that is, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin—*"Then said I"*—now, here's Jesus speaking. Now, watch it—*"Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written [about] me"*—He's talking about the Old Testament. Did you know that all the Old Testament is about Jesus?—*"Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."* (Hebrews 10:5–7) That's why He came.

That's what the book of Hebrews says—that the Old Testament prophesied that one day a child would be born of a virgin: *“a body...thou [hast] prepared me.”* (Hebrews 10:5) And, there was a story written in the Old Testament—a story of a Savior who would come, a story already written. And, Jesus just stepped out of heaven and said, “I'm here to do your will. I sanctify myself. I set myself apart to do your will, O God.” There was a plan for the Lord Jesus written in the book, the Old Testament. Jesus stepped out of heaven. He fulfilled that plan. He said, “I have finished the work that you gave me to do, and it is done.” (John 17:4) And, He never made one misstep because He said, *“I do always those things that please him.”* (John 8:29) Now, none of us have ever been able to say that, but Jesus said that: *“I do always those things that please him.”* (John 8:29)

Now, what was Jesus doing—His will or the Father's will? Well, He was doing the Father's will. He said, *“Not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42) In His humanity, in the body that was prepared, He just simply presented Himself to the Father, and He said, *“[Lord,] I come...to do thy will,”* (Hebrews 10:7) and He said, “What the Father says, I say; what the Father does, I do.” (John 5:19)

Now, here's the question: How did Jesus know the Father's will? Because Jesus is the pattern. How did He know it? Did He figure it out? Did He think it out? No, it came from a relationship to the Father. Look, if you will, in verse 21: *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* (John 17:21) Jesus had such an intimate relationship with the Father that He did not need a roadmap; He did not need a formula. He just simply was in the Father, and the Father was in Him.

A man that's had a profound influence on my life is Major Ian Thomas. Major Thomas has written a book that, if you've not read it, you need to read. It's called *The Saving Life of Christ*. It is a classic, and it has had a great, great impact on my life. Sometimes people ask me to name some of the books that have had a major impact. That book would always be in the list—*The Saving Life of Christ*. In that book, or in one of Ian Thomas' writing—I think it's in *The Saving Life of Christ*—he tells of the Lord Jesus Christ doing the will of God, and he mentions some things that Jesus did. For example, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, and that was glorious. That pleased the Father, I'm certain. Then, on another occasion, the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He shouted and said, *“Lazarus, come forth,”* (John 11:43) and Lazarus came forth from the dead. On another occasion, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. On another occasion, Jesus spat on the ground and made clay. Now, He did many other things, but let's just take those four things that Major Thomas mentions: He preached, He shouted, He washed, and He spit. Which of those four was the most spiritual? Be careful. None was the most spiritual; all were equal. Why? Because He

said, *“I do always those things that please him.”* (John 8:29) So, if you’re pleasing Him, that’s it. If you’re not pleasing Him, it doesn’t matter what you do. *“I do always those things that please him.”* (John 8:29)

Point: Did Jesus surrender to preach or to spit? Neither one—He surrendered to God to preach or to spit. You see, what was Jesus? He was just available to God to preach, to shout, to wash, or to spit. *The will of God is not a roadmap; it is a relationship.* That was the relationship that Jesus Christ had with the Father. Now, look in verse 18 and see what He says about us: *“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”* (John 17:18) Now, the problem is that so many of us want to surrender to preach or want to surrender to be a missionary. No! You don’t surrender to a task; you surrender to the Lord. You see, Jesus is the pattern. Jesus just said, *“[Father,] I come...to do [your] will.”* (Hebrews 10:7)

Now, is the tool...is the tool to be committed to the task or is the tool to be committed to the carpenter? It is the carpenter that the tool is to be committed to, not to the task. You and I are the tools; God is the craftsman. So many times, we get in missionary conferences, and we want to surrender to a task or we want to surrender to a field. And, you go to missionary meetings, and you’ll have somebody stand up with histrionics and tears and talk about some great need. And then, they will say this—and I’ve heard it over and over again: “The need is the call”—“the need is the call.” Well, that’s foolish because there are needs everywhere—there are needs everywhere. And, if you say, “The need is the call,” there are thousands of needs. You’re going to be constantly confused. And, you think of the blunders that have been made in the world by people who are trying to meet a need rather than abiding in the Lord.

For example, think of Moses. God wanted Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt into Canaan. Moses started out to be a missionary; he ended up being a murderer—killed an Egyptian, buried him in the desert sands. But, the winds uncovered that body and exposed this man who, rather than listening to God, got a cause in his mind, got a need in his mind.

Let me give you somebody else. Think of Abraham. God called Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people—father of the Hebrews—but Abraham couldn’t wait on God. He got all wrapped up in a task rather than abiding in the Lord. So, Abraham and Sarah had a committee meeting, and then they coopted Hagar into their committee, Sarah’s handmaiden. And, Abraham went into Hagar and had a sexual relationship with Hagar, and Ishmael was born—taking things into their own hands. And, for fifteen years, Abraham tried to extract a blessing from Ishmael—trying to do something for God, taking the matter into his own hands because he was committed to a task. Then, Isaac was born, and the blessing was with Isaac. The only explanation for Ishmael was Abraham and Hagar. The only explanation for Isaac was God—was God.

You see, how does a man become a fanatic? He becomes a fanatic the same way: he's committed to a cause. He's committed to a purpose. He is committed to a need rather than doing what Jesus did—being surrendered to the will of God, just simply saying, "Preach, shout, wash, spit. I come to do thy will, O God." Now, Jesus is the pattern. That's the first point. Got it? Say, "Got it!" Got it, okay.

II. Jesus Is the Purpose

Here's the second thing: not only is Jesus the pattern—"As you have sent me, Father, so I send them" (John 17:18)—but Jesus is also the purpose. Now, what was Jesus' purpose when He was here on earth? Well, look, if you will, in verses 18 and 19: He says, "*As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world*"—now, watch it—"And for [thy sake]"—"And for their sakes"—"*I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*" (John 17:18–19) Now, Jesus said, "I am setting myself aside for their sakes. I am the purpose for them. It is... I am doing this on purpose. I'm doing this for their sake."

Now, what was the purpose of Jesus? What was His purpose in sanctification, being set aside for a purpose? Look, if you will, in verses 21 and 22; look at it. Here's the purpose: "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe*"—now, watch it—"that the world...believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one"—O-N-E—"even as we are one." (John 17:21–22) Now, what was the purpose that Jesus set Himself aside for? Well, it was the glory of God—the glory of God—not a field somewhere, not a need somewhere, but the glory of God. It was to manifest the glory of God. That makes it very clear and very plain in this passage of Scripture. It is the glory. Look in verse 22: "*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.*" (John 17:22)

What was that glory? What was the glory that Jesus Christ had when He was on this earth? Well, it was God's likeness. That's all glory is, is just God's likeness. When you looked at Jesus, you could see God. Jesus said, "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*" (John 14:9) "Father, I have glorified you on earth. I have let your life, God, be manifest in me. I have set myself aside for one purpose, one purpose only—that is, your glory. And, and Lord, I have done that. I've been sanctified for that." Now, He says, "Father, I am giving this glory to them. The glory that you gave me now, Lord, I am giving to them." Look in verse 22: "*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.*" (John 17:22) Can you think of that? Listen, can you imagine the glory that Jesus had? You know what He says here? "Father, I'm going to give that to Adrian. The glory that you gave me I am going to give to Adrian." So, therefore, Jesus is not only the pattern; He is the purpose.

What is the purpose of my life? I'll tell you what it is. Just as you could look at Jesus and see the Father, you ought to be able to look at Adrian and see Jesus. That's what it is—that's what it is. God wants the life of His Son manifested here on this earth. That is the purpose of the will of God—that people can see Jesus in us. Jesus is the pattern, and Jesus is the purpose.

Now, we have this glory in an earthen vessel, and only when the vessel is broken will the glory shine through. But folks, do you know, if you're glorifying Jesus, it really doesn't matter where you're serving. My son, Steve—David—stood up here just a few moments ago and said, "Pray for us in Extremadura, in southwest Spain." The very word *extremadura* means "extremely hard." That's...that's the name of the place. And, we talked about the souls being saved in Guatemala. It's not like that in Spain; it's extremely hard. Well, friend, it doesn't make any difference whether you're in a fruitful field or a non-fruitful field. You're not there primarily to reap fruit; you're there to glorify Jesus Christ. That's all! And, there is no higher place nor better purpose than the one purpose, and that is to glorify Jesus in a big place, a small place, a fruitful place, a non-fruitful place. What is your purpose in life? "Father, as you've sent me, so send I them. And Father, I sanctify myself, that you will be glorified. And, the glory that you've given me, now, Lord, I've given them." (John 17:18–19, 22)

III. Jesus Is the Power

Now, are you following when I said Jesus is the will of God for you? You see, Jesus is the pattern. Jesus is the purpose. And now, here's the final thing: Jesus is also the power. Remember that I said that not only do you need to know the will of God but you need the power to do the will of God? Don't think that you're home free just simply if you know what God wants you to do. You need to do it.

Now, notice verse 23: Jesus said, "*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*" (John 17:23) Don't miss this. This is shouting ground. Jesus said, "I want the world to know, Father, that you love Adrian like you love me." Now, how...how am I going to have the power to do the will of God? Well, it's in this verse. Christ is in me, and I am in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look: "*I in them*"—Jesus in them—"*thou in me*" (John 17:23)—God in the Father, or the Father in Jesus. Jesus is in Adrian, and the Father is in Jesus; and, therefore, God lives in me. God lives in you. God has not told us, "Now, suck them up"—as they say on the football field, "We're going out there. Now guys, you know, grit your teeth and do your best." No! Where is the power? It is Jesus living His life through you and Jesus getting the glory. Therefore, you are to surrender to Jesus, not to a formula or to a roadmap. It is a relationship with a person.

Now, here's another ancillary verse I want you to write down: 1 Corinthians 12,

verses 12 through 13: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body”*—that is, what you’re seeing tonight standing up here preaching is one person, but I am hands and feet, eyes and ears, nose, mouth, and so forth, but I’m just one person—*“the body...hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”*—that is, the Body of Christ—*“For by one Spirit”*—that is, the Holy Spirit—*“are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 12:12–13) We’re in the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is in us. Now, by the Holy Spirit, therefore, we are baptized into the Body of Christ, and, therefore, by the Holy Spirit we share the life of Jesus. That’s what He’s saying in verse 23: *“I in them. Father, you in me, and I in them.”* (John 17:23)

How does this happen? It’s... The Holy Spirit of God does that. When... Why give my heart to Jesus? I am baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. I am placed into the Body of Christ. You see, before Pentecost, Jesus had one body. After Pentecost, He has many bodies. They’re all here—or, at least, a new body. He had a Bethlehem body: *“A body...thou [hast] prepared me.”* (Hebrews 10:5) Now, He has a Pentecostal body: *“we, being many, are one body.”* (Romans 12:5) And, the same Holy Spirit that lived in Jesus—*“thou in me”*—now lives in us—*“I in them.”* (John 17:23) Isn’t that wonderful? Where’s the power come from? Well, it comes from Him. We are members of His Body.

Now, what is the will of my body for my hand? Do you know the will of my body for my hand? My head—that’s it. Who is the head of the Church? Who? Jesus. All right. We’re members; He’s the head, right? Now, so, what is the...what is the will of Adrian for that hand? Suppose when I waked this morning, my hand said, *“Good morning, Mr. Rogers. We five had a committee meeting, and we have decided we’re going to shave you today. And, we have decided today that we’re going to write some letters for you, and we have decided today we’re going to scratch your ear. And, we...”* Man, I’d be petrified. Do you see how the Body of Christ makes a mistake sometimes? Sometimes we have an idea we’re going to do this for Him or we’re going to do that for Him. What is the will of Adrian for that hand? My head. What is the will of God for you? Jesus Christ. He’s the head of the Church. You’re to be available to Him.

And, therefore, you must stay so connected to Him that you can receive the impulses from the head. Suppose I want to write a letter, so I send an impulse to my hand that my hand is to pick up a pen and begin to write on that paper. Suppose my hand says, *“Well, there is no pen. There is no paper. So, how can I do that?”* Very frankly, that’s none of the hand’s business. If I tell my hand to write a letter, don’t you think I have enough sense to know I’ve got to get a pen and some paper? And, if God

tells you to do something, mister, He will enable you to do it. I mean, that's His business. That's not your business to say, "Well, there's no paper. There's no pen." No, that is His business. He's the One in charge of the Church.

Conclusion

What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that the will of God for you—it is so simple—the will of God for you is Jesus. He is the pattern. He is the purpose—His glory. And, He is the power. It is Him in you doing it. Isn't that neat? Man, that's...that's glorious. And, the thing of it is, it's so simple—it is so simple.

Now, of course, there will be a field. Of course you will preach, shout, spit, or whatever—of course you will, but that is the byproduct of a relationship to Him, where you are listening to Him and He is speaking to you. And, He has a will for each of us. There are many members in the Body. Who's the most important—the missionary on the foreign field or the lawyer, the doctor, the clerk, the football coach? Friend, if they're in the will of God, they are all equally important. Isn't that right? They're all equally important. Now, *"we are members one of another."* (Ephesians 4:25) We're energized by the same Holy Spirit of God.

What is my joy and my privilege? It is simply to be available. So, what must I do? The only reasonable thing that I can do—Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God"*—listen to this—*"which is your reasonable service."* (Romans 12:1) I mean, that's the only reasonable thing to do. He died for us. He lives in us. We just simply present ourselves to Him. That is our reasonable service—*"that [we] may prove"*—that is, that we may experience—*"what is that good...acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* (Romans 12:2) Just present yourself to Him and say, "Here I am, Lord," and you'll prove the will of God experientially in your life. You present yourself not to a need, not to a field, not to a cause, not to a ministry, but to Jesus Christ. And, it is the renewed mind that will transform you. And, just as God had a purpose for Jesus—He said, "It's written. There's a plan written for me in the volume of the book" (Hebrews 10:7)—God has a purpose for you here.

Now, we quote Ephesians 2:8 and 9, but have you ever connected it with verse 10? Ephesians 2:8–9 says, *"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"*—but now, listen to verse 10—*"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Just as God had a plan before ordained for Jesus, God has a plan before ordained for you. There is a plan written to you. There is a purpose for you. And, when you come to the end of your life, wouldn't it be wonderful for you to say, "I have finished the work

you gave me to do”? That’s what Jesus said. (John 17:4) And then, Jesus said, “Father, as you’ve sent me, now I send them.” (John 17:18)

You have but one responsibility. It’s found over there in Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6: *“Trust in the LORD with all [of your] heart; and lean not unto [your] own understanding. In all [of your] ways acknowledge him...he [will] direct [your path].”* (Proverbs 3:5–6) Just as a bird in migration is directed by the unseen hand of God, the Holy Spirit will be to you what instinct is to a bird. Come up close, and I want to tell you something: if you practice this principle, you will not find the will of God; the will of God will find you—the will of God will find you. When you begin to say, “Jesus, you are the pattern. You are the purpose. My life is to glorify you, and you are the power. I am abiding in you, and you in me. I am your hand. I am your foot. I am your eye. I’m your ear. I’m yours,” then the dear Holy Spirit, moment by moment, will guide you.

Are you committed to Him? When you are prepared to be to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus is prepared to be to you what the Father was to Him. And, what you have to do is just sanctify yourself; just set yourself aside for the will of God. I don’t know what it’s going to be for you. Some of you are going to feel the sweet impulses of the Holy Spirit saying, “Go here. Go there. Do this or do that.” I don’t know what it’ll be. Big place, small place—I don’t know. But, I know this much: it’ll be wonderful. It may be hard. You may die. You may be a martyr. That doesn’t make any difference. It’ll be wonderful.

That’s not a formula. Everybody wants a little formula. That’s a principle. The will of God for you is J-E-S-U-S. He’s the pattern. He’s the purpose. He’s the power. Just present yourself to Him a living sacrifice to preach or spit—it doesn’t make any difference. Amen? Glory to God. Hallelujah! Father, thank you—thank you, Lord—that as the Father dwells in you, you dwell in us. O Father, thank you for this. Teach me, Lord, how to live in this relationship. Teach us all. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 24, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 17:20

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Prayed to Seal God's Word
- II. Jesus Prayed to Secure God's Workers
- III. Jesus Prayed to Seek God's Will

Conclusion

Introduction

And you've heard, beautifully set to music, what our Lord taught about prayer. And that's the way He taught us to pray. But we need to see also how He Himself prayed. So turn to John chapter 17, and we're going to be speaking tonight on this subject: "The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed." Now, the reason I say that is, it is because the Savior prayed, and we have His prayer recorded. And what a privilege we have to open our Bibles tonight and, as it were, to hear the Son of God pray. Now, this prayer is not a long prayer, but it is a profound prayer. And as I think about John chapter 17, which is the prayer of the Lord Jesus, this thought comes immediately to me: If Jesus prayed, if Jesus desired to pray, if Jesus felt the need to pray, how much more do I need to pray? How much more do you need to pray?

Now, the Bible teaches much about the fact that Jesus prayed. And these verses, even before we get to John 17, just to set the stage. Luke chapter 5, verses 15 and 16—the Bible says, "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 into the wilderness, and prayed."

When the crowds were thronging Him in the middle of His ministry; when it looked like He's being imminently successful—and this is all that any preacher or minister could wish for—great multitudes, Jesus backed off, went into the wilderness, and prayed. I'm telling you, Brother Bob, that's a lesson for every preacher. That's a lesson for every one of us in Christian work. The service and crowds and multitudes—that's no substitute for prayer.

And then, Luke chapter 6 and verse 12—the Bible says, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into to a mountain to pray, and continued all night—all

night—in prayer to God.” Some of us have never spent a night—an entire night—in prayer to God. The Savior did.

And then, in Mark chapter 1 and 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.”

One time, a Jehovah’s Witness asked me this question—he said, or she said—I cannot remember whether it was a man or a woman at this time—“Well, if you believe that Jesus is God, why did He pray? To whom was He praying? Was He praying for Himself?” What that dear person failed to understand that, while Jesus was God, and while Jesus is God, Jesus was and is man. And as man, He prayed. He came as truly God and also as perfect man. And as man, He prayed. And He taught us to pray by precept and by example. And if we would improve our praying, everything else in our lives would improve. So, there are some reasons now that Jesus prayed, and we find them here in John chapter 17; and I want you to look at them, and, let those reasons be our reasons.

I. Jesus Prayed to Seal God’s Word

Reason number one: Jesus prayed to seal God’s Word. Now, Jesus had been teaching. And He was in the upper room. One of the greatest discourses known to man is the teaching of Jesus, what we call, “The Upper Room Discourse.” And, we read the conclusion of that discourse in chapter 16 and verse 33—and He says, “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Now, when He says, “These things have I spoken unto you,” what was He talking about? Well, if you’ll read the previous passage, He taught them about foot washing. He taught them about forgiveness. He taught them about the Lord’s Supper. He taught them about heaven. He taught them about abiding in Him. He taught them about the Holy Spirit. He taught them about love. He taught them about prayer, and many other things. And as He taught them, then He sealed His teaching with prayer. Notice in chapter 17: These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven...”

Now, chapter 17, therefore, is connected to chapter 16, connected to the fact that He says, “These things have I spoken unto you,” and then He prayed. You see, the preaching of the Word of God, the teaching of the Word of God, the sharing of the Word of God, is sealed in prayer. That’s the reason the apostles, who were ministers of the Word of God, said in Acts chapter 6 and verse 4: “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” And if you’re a Sunday School teacher, if you’re a preacher boy, if you’re an evangelist, if you’re a missionary, whomever you are, and whatever you are, let me say this: that you must always saturate and seal your teaching

with prayer, because you can teach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed, number one, to seal God's Word.

II. Jesus Prayed to Secure God's Workers

Number two: Jesus prayed not only to seal God's Word, but Jesus prayed to secure God's workers; I mean, to make God's workers secure. Look, if you will, in chapter 16 and verse 32—He says now, “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” Jesus knew that before long persecution would scatter these. And Jesus knew that these people needed to be secure, and they were secure in His prayer. Now, go on down, if you will, to chapter 17 and verse 20. And the Bible says here that He is, praying for His disciples. And, look, if you will, in verse 20: “Neither pray I thee for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”

When Jesus prayed, He prayed for His disciples that were with Him then, and He prayed for Adrian Rogers, Jim Whitmire. He prayed for Bob Sorrell. He prayed for all of those here on the staff, for Brother Smith, and all of us here on the staff. And He prayed for all of our deacons. He prayed for all of our Sunday School teachers. He prayed for the last and the least member of this church. And He prayed for every Christian who would ever live down through the centuries who believe on Him through the word of those early disciples and apostles. That teaches me something. It teaches me that we should minister the Word with prayer, and it means that we should pray for one another, for workers, that they would be safe and secure in this world. And it tells me something else. It tells me, folks, that we can cover people with prayer. We can protect people with prayer.

I have people who pray for me; and I can tell you the truth, I rest in those prayers. And when people tell me—and I know they mean it—“Pastor, I pray for you faithfully and regularly,” it brings tears to my eyes frequently to think that, of all six billion people on earth, I am the recipient of someone's prayers, that people pray for me. How we ought to pray for one another. But what a blessing it is to know that the Savior has already prayed for me and continues to pray for me, because the Bible says, “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” And did you know He looked down through time and prayed? Did you know that prayer can go where you cannot go? This morning, I did business in Spain in prayer. I brought God's blessing upon a preacher in Spain. His name is David. He's my son. And Joyce and I held hands and were able to pray for him, that God would bless him and anoint him today as he ministered the Word of God. I'll tell you what else I have done. I have prayed a prayer with a delayed detonation. I have prayed for the people that my grandchildren are going to marry. Haven't met them yet,

but I can pray for them. I haven't met them yet. But I can pray for them. I can pray for children yet to be born, and which I have. I have prayed for my posterity. I am standing on God's Word that says, "The generation of the upright shall be blessed, and his seed shall be mighty upon the earth." Jesus forwarded His prayer 2,000 years, and that prayer that He prayed 2,000 years ago is being applied to me today. How we need to learn to pray for one another.

III. Jesus Prayed to Seek God's Will

So prayer is to seal God's Word. Prayer is to secure God's workers. But, primarily—listen—prayer is to seek God's will. Now, begin now in chapter 17, verse 1: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Now, what Jesus is saying is, "Father, Your will be done in me, so that my life will glorify You." And when Jesus said, "The hour is come," what He is really talking about here is the cross.

And, incidentally, I want you to see how Jesus anticipated the cross. Just go back to John chapter 2 and verse 4 with me for a moment, and let me show you something—John chapter 2 and verse 4. Mary had asked the Lord to do something at the wedding feast. And He said, in verse 4: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Jesus knew that He had a fateful hour. Jesus knew that one day He would embrace the cross. Then turn, if you will, to chapter 7 for just a moment, and look with me in verse 6—John chapter 7 and verse 6: "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come..." Isn't it obvious that Jesus knew that there was a plan for Him, a will for Him, a way for Him? He had this in His mind.

Turn to chapter 8, and look in verse 20, if you will: "These words spake Jesus in the treasury as he taught in the temple; and no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come." That tells us that we are immortal and invincible when we're in the will of God, doing God's will until that will is done. His hour had not yet come. And then, continue to go through the Scripture here. Look in chapter 12 and verse 23—John chapter 12 and verse 23: "And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Jesus knew now that the hour of His crucifixion was at hand.

Turn to chapter 13 and verse 1: "Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." And then, that brings us back to chapter 17, verse 1: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, the hour is come." Jesus said, "I

come to do thy will, O Lord.” And Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed, “Not my will, but thine be done.”

Now, what is the purpose of prayer? What is the purpose of the will of God? The purpose of prayer is to find the will of God, to do the will of God. And what is the will of God? It is the glorification of the Lord, of God the Father. Look, if you will, in verse 2: “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give his eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” Verse 3: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee and the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

When you do God’s will, you glorify God. And, so the purpose of this prayer—it was not a selfish prayer. It was a personal prayer, but not a selfish prayer. As a matter of fact, if you take the first five verses and read them, you’ll find the word glorify, or glory, used five times in the first five verses. What the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned about here is the glory of God. This is always the first concern in prayer, if it is effective prayer: praying like Jesus prayed.

Now, we just heard sung the model prayer, sometimes called The Lord’s Prayer. And how did it begin? “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.” How does it end? “For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory...” What is the purpose of prayer? It is to glorify Almighty God. Not where we receive our wants on earth, but where we do God’s will in heaven. And so, if you want prayer answered, then let the chief motive of your prayer be to glorify God. When you begin to pray—listen carefully—when you begin to pray with the glory of God in mind, your prayer life will radically change.

Now, what is the purpose of prayer? What was Jesus’ prayer that we’ve seen so far? First of all, to seal the Word. Secondly, to secure the workers. Thirdly, to seek the will of Almighty God. Now, that brings us to how are we going to know the will of God? It’s very obvious that Jesus was keenly aware that God had a will for Him and God had a work for Him. He could say, “Lord, the hour is come. Be glorified. I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” Now, I want to spend the rest of our time tonight talking about this: how to pray in the will of God, how to know beyond any shadow of a doubt or peradventure the will of God. I cannot say that I have arrived and that I know how to do this perfectly personally, but I am learning. And I want to ask you to learn along with me.

May I say that in this building tonight there are four categories of persons, concerning the will of God. First of all, there are those who are indifferent to the will of God. You’re not concerned. As a matter of fact, you may not even be listening now, but you don’t know that I just said this. You’re just indifferent to the will of God.

Then, there’s another category of persons. These are not people who are indifferent;

these are people who are rebellious. They don't want God's will. They say, "Not thy will, but mine, be done."

Then there's a third category of persons who will never know the will of God. Not only the indifferent, and the rebellious, but these are those who are ignorant. They just simply don't do the will of God, because they don't practice a principle. And so, therefore, they miss the will of God, not out of indifference, and not out of rebellion, but out of sheer ignorance.

Then there's a fourth category of persons here tonight. Those who know the principle that I'm going to show you from the Word of God, and who cannot miss the will of God. Now, I hope that you'll be in the fourth category, because Jesus' prayer is a prayer to secure God's will. And let's see what it was.

Now, this entire chapter deals with this prayer. And we're not going to be able to deal with all of it, but fast-forward to verse 17, and here's the key. It's in the word sanctification. Now, if I were to ask you to define sanctification, how many people could define sanctification tonight? Well, listen to this scripture: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, and that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Now, the Lord Jesus says, in verse 19, that He sanctifies Himself. Some people have the idea that to be sanctified is to be made holy. No! Jesus was already holy. Don't get the idea that Jesus needed to be sanctified in order to be made holy. Let that thought perish from you. A sanctified person, indeed, is a holy person, but it's not to be made holy. To be sanctified means to be set apart. Here's the definition, in case anybody ever asks you. It means to be set apart for an intelligent purpose—to be set apart for an intelligent purpose; that is, to be used for an intelligent purpose. That's what it means to be sanctified.

Jesus knew that God the Father had a plan for Him. Jesus knew that God the Father had a work for Him to do. He had sanctified Himself. That is, He had set Himself aside for the intelligent purpose of Almighty God. As a matter of fact, in the book of Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 7, it speaks of the Lord Jesus, when it says, "Then I said, Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." That's why

Jesus came. He sanctified Himself to do God's will.

And then, Jesus said, "I do always those things that please him." That's what sanctification is. It's just simply doing the things that please God. Now, Jesus said, "I sanctify myself." That is, "I am set aside for the intelligent purpose of my Father. And then, the same thing that was the principle in Jesus' life was to be the principle in our lives. Notice in verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Just as God the Father has a plan for God the Son, God the Son has a plan for us. We're to have the same purpose that Jesus had, and we're to operate with the same principle that Jesus had.

Now, let me ask you a question: How did Jesus know the will of God? Did He read it somewhere? Did He do it by mathematics? No! Jesus knew the will of God by a relationship with the Father. Notice verse 21: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee..." Jesus had such a personal, intimate relationship with the Father that He knew the Father's will. Now, stay with me, because this is going to get a little philosophical, and you may miss it, but please don't.

Major Ian Thomas is a friend of mine, one of the greatest Bible teachers, I believe, that God has ever given. Major Thomas, on one occasion, was speaking in our church, and he told about some episodes that Jesus did when He was here on this earth. And he asked this question. It was a rhetorical question. He said, "Of the things that Jesus did, which was the most spiritual? Was the most spiritual thing that Jesus did to give the Sermon on the Mount? Or was the most spiritual thing that Jesus did the raising of Lazarus from the dead? Or was the most spiritual thing the washing of the disciples' feet? Or was the most spiritual thing that Jesus did was to spit on the ground?" Now, remember, Jesus spat on the ground and made clay to anoint a blind man's eyes. Now, which is more spiritual—the Sermon on the Mount or spitting on the ground? Major Thomas rightly said, "Neither was more spiritual. Both were the will of God. He never did anything that was not the will of God. He did God's will always, and He did God's will only."

So Major Thomas asked this question: When Jesus sanctified Himself, did Jesus sanctify Himself to preach or to spit? Neither. He surrendered Himself not to preach or to spit; He surrendered Himself to God. And, as Major Thomas said, He said, "Father, I'm available to preach, to shout, to wash, to spit. I'm available. I am just simply here." Now, a sanctified person is a person who has set himself apart for the purpose or the person to whom he is sanctified.

Now, a tool—a tool—is sanctified or set apart to do certain things. And, the tool is sanctified to the craftsman. Now, the tool is not to be committed, therefore, to a task. No tool is to be committed to building a house or to building a shelf or to building a fence.

The tool is not committed to the job; the tool is committed to the carpenter. Do you understand what I'm talking about? Now, folks, we are the tool; the heavenly Father is the craftsman. We are to be surrendered through prayer to Him to do His will, whatever it is. Don't surrender to a task. Don't surrender to a certain field of the world.

So many times, we want to say, "Well, I am surrendered to be a missionary to thus-and-such a place to do thus-and-such a thing." Well, that's dangerous. Well, somebody says, "But, Pastor, the need is the call." Well, there are needs all over. Then you're going to be one confused person. Somebody said you're going to be like a termite in a yo-yo. You're going to be confused if you think that the need is the call, because there are needs everywhere. There are thousands of needs. You think of the blunders that people have made when they have committed themselves to a task rather than to the Lord.

Moses committed himself to a task to deliver God's people. He started out to be a missionary and he ended up a murderer. He made a horrible blunder, and he set God's work back 40 years.

Abraham got committed to a task rather than trusting the Lord, and he and Sarah had a committee meeting when they should have been seeking the face of God. And then, finally, they brought somebody else into the committee. They brought Hagar in there, an Egyptian handmaid that belonged to Sarah, and they produced a child, Ishmael. And today, we're in drastic straights in the world, because of the tensions in the Middle East, because Abraham could not wait on God. God never accepted what Abraham tried to do. For 15 years, Abraham tried to extract a blessing out of Ishmael. But Ishmael was Abraham's problem, because Abraham was committed to a task rather than committed to the Lord. And the only explanation for Ishmael was Abraham. Fifteen years later, Isaac was born, and the only explanation for Isaac was God. Now, folks, we have to make up our mind whether we are committed to a task or whether we're committed to the Lord Himself.

Do you know what a fanatic is? Boy, be careful of fanatics. I don't want any fanatics in this church. A person becomes a fanatic by being committed to a cause, or being committed to a purpose, rather than committed to Almighty God. Sanctification is to be set aside for an intelligent purpose of the one to which you are sanctified.

Now, what was the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? Notice in verse 22. He says, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." What is that glory? The glory of the Lord Jesus was to express the Father's likeness. People could look at Jesus and see the Father. That's what he says in verse 22, again: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them..." As God the Father gave His glory to the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus gave that glory to me. That is, in my

humanity, and I hope this is true: in my humanity, you are to see Jesus Christ. Jesus is to be made manifest in me that the world might believe in Jesus.

Now, what am I committed to? What is the will of God for me? And I'm going to get to the bottom line. Maybe you haven't been following me thus far. But we said the purpose of prayer, among other things, is to seek God's will. That's what Jesus is praying about. I can give you the will of God for me in one word, and I can give you the will of God for you in one wonderful word. Are you ready for that word? Jesus—Jesus. Now, you say, "Wait a minute, Adrian, that doesn't make sense. I mean, I can't relate to that. I love Jesus. I believe in Jesus. But, what do you mean when you say the will of God for me is Jesus?" Very simply, this: Jesus is the head of the church. We are members in His body. You believe that, don't you? Of course! First Corinthians chapter 12, verses 12 and 13: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we're all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." That is, all of us together in totality are the body of Jesus called Bellevue. Jesus is the head. The Holy Spirit is the common life. The Holy Spirit that's in me is the Holy Spirit that's in you. So we're just not an organization; we are an organism with Christ as our head.

Now, when you are saved, you become a member of this body. Before Pentecost, Jesus only had one body. Then, the Holy Spirit came, and He had 120 bodies. Not a Bethlehem body, but a Pentecostal body, made up of 120 members with 120 pair of eyes. And then the body became 3,120 on the Day of Pentecost, when 3,000 were saved. And the body continues to grow. Now, let's see if I can explain that further.

Let's suppose that in this body I am a hand. What is the purpose of the hand? Why is the hand there? What is the will for the hand? The head—the head! The hand—this hand—is simply to be there to move at the impulse of the head. What is the will for the hand? My head is the will for this hand. I mean, suppose these fingers met in a committee meeting, and they said, "Now, Adrian, today we're going to scratch you, and we're going to shave you, and we're going to feed you. And, today, we're going to write some letters for you"—I'd be scared to death of that thing. But that's what... I don't want this hand to be committed to any task. I want this hand to be committed to this right here, isn't that right? You are not committed to any task. The will of the body for the hand is the head, and the will of God for you is Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church. You just simply surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of that hand is to be available, as Ian Thomas says, "to preach or to spit."

Now, you may be a dentist. You may be an engineer. You may be a housewife. You may be a pastor. You may be a missionary. One is not superior to another. Do you get

the idea that a missionary is a special edition of a Christian, or a pastor is a special person? A carpenter, who is there by the will of God, surrendered to the head, is absolutely in the will of God, as precious to God, as important to God as a pastor. The Bible says it: God hath set every member in the body as it hath pleased him.

So, what do I do? There's only one reasonable thing to do. We find that in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...which is your reasonable service." I mean, the only reasonable thing to do is just simply say, "Lord, I commit myself to You—not to a need, not to a field, not to a ministry, but to You."

Conclusion

What is the will of God for Adrian? It is to be sanctified. What is sanctification? I am here to do His will. Just as Jesus said, "I sanctify myself, and I do the will of Him that sent me; for this reason, I pray for these, that they might be sanctified, and that they might do my will." Now, the will of God for you is simply the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you say, "Well then, how am I going to know God's will? How am I going to find God's will?" You don't find God's will. God's will finds you. God's will is not a roadmap; it is a relationship. And God will direct you by the Holy Spirit, as a bird is directed in migration. The Holy Spirit is to you what instinct is to a bird. You simply find yourself walking in the Spirit and doing the will of God.

Now, He promised to save me, if I would trust Him and commit myself to Him. And I've done that, and He's saved me. The same God that has promised to save me, if I would trust Him and commit myself to Him, is the same God who has promised to guide me, if I would trust Him and commit myself to Him. Are you committed to Him? If you're totally surrendered to Him, then it's not your job to find the will of God. It is your job to obey the impulse of the Spirit, as you know it, and when you know it. And you can say, "I may not know what it's going to be. I don't know what is coming next, but I know one thing. It is going to be exciting, because all there is of me is committed to all there is of Him." I'm going to tell you this: If you sanctify yourself by prayer, set yourself aside totally, wanting to know the will of God, surrendering to the lordship of Christ, you cannot miss the will of God. If you don't do that, it's impossible for you to find the will of God.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Father God, I pray that, if the Son of God prayed that He might glorify You, that He might be sanctified and set aside for the intelligent purpose that You had for Him, and then, dear Lord, if He prayed for me that I might be sanctified and set aside to Him for the purpose that He has for me, Lord, help me tonight, anew and afresh, to surrender my heart, my life to Him.

Thank You, Father, that we can know and do Your will through prayer as we seek Your face and sanctify ourselves to the purpose for which You've called us. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

Your Reactions Are Showing

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 23, 1989

Main Scripture Text: John 18:1–11

*“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath:
the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”*

JOHN 18:11

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find please John chapter 18. And, when you’ve found it, may I have your attention. Look up here. And, let me tell you this that the true test of your character is not seen in your actions but in your reactions.

Have you ever gone to the doctor? And, when you were there he was checking you out and he put you up on the table and took that little hammer and tapped your knee? He wanted to see if you had that proper reaction. Now, he’s trying’ to find out something about you. Now, you could sit up there, and he could say, “Lift your knee.” And, you could go up and down like that. Or he could say, “Lift your leg.” But, he doesn’t want to see what you planned to do. He wants to see that reaction. Because it’s going to tell him

something about you.

Now, dear friend, all of us can control our actions. But, it's our reactions that really count and really show what we are. The difference between our actions and our reactions is really the difference between reputation and character. Somebody said that reputation is what others think about you. Character is what God and your wife know about you. Sometimes there's a vast difference. But, I want us to think today about reactions. And, I want us to see how our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ, reacted first of all to the failure of a friend or when a friend let him down and disappointed him. What was the reaction of the Lord Jesus? Then I want you to see how the Lord Jesus Christ reacted to the wrongdoing of his enemies. What was His reaction? So you're going to see the Lord Jesus reacting to his friends and his foes in this passage of Scripture that I have before us.

It speaks of the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. John 18:1–5 says, *“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.”* They were saying Jesus is from the hills, Jesus the hillbilly. *“...Jesus saith unto them, I am...”* (John 18:5). Actually the word *he* is not in the original. You'll notice if you have the King James Version of the Scriptures the word *he* is italicized. And, what the Lord Jesus Christ said was this. *“Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he.”* (John 18:7-8). That was the great word for deity in the Old Testament. He just simply said, “I am.”

Now, dear friend, when he said that, that just so shook them that a tremendous thing happened to them. Notice what happened then in John 18:5–11 says, *“...And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”*

Now, here's the situation. Jesus Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane. The word

Gethsemane means olive press. And, it is not without significance because in that place where they would press the oil out of the olives, the Lord Jesus Christ felt tremendous pressure upon him. He said in another place, “...*My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death...*” (Mark 14:34). You’re going to see in a moment Jesus’ love in action. But, now wait a moment—not only Jesus’ love in action but you’re going to see Jesus’ love under great pressure. Sometimes we excuse the way we act because of the pressure that’s on us. And we say, “Well, it really wasn’t my fault. I was carrying a load. I was under great pressure.” Has anybody ever known more pressure than the Lord Jesus Christ did as he was there in the Garden of Gethsemane? He prayed and the sweat became as great drops of blood.

After awhile, we hear the clanking of armor, we see the flashing of lanterns, and we hear the murmuring of voices. There comes into the garden a crowd—a host of people—led by that archfiend, Judas himself. Judas comes, embraces the Lord Jesus, plants that kiss of infamy upon his cheek—a kiss that burned like a coal from hell—and said, “Hail, Master.” And, at that time they surrounded him and he said, “*They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground—*Jesus gives them another chance. He asks them again. They haven’t learned their lesson—*Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he...*” (John 18:5-8). They come to take him away.

As the high priest’s servant approaches the Lord Jesus, Simon Peter—who’s now awakening, who’s been asleep there, who was supposed to have been watching and praying with Jesus—leaps up from the ground. He is perhaps wiping the sleep from his eyes. He realizes there’s a situation, draws his sword, charges in, and takes a whack at a man named Malchus, who was the servant of the high priest. Now, Peter might have been a good fisherman, but he wasn’t much of a swordsman. He meant—evidently—to cut off this man’s head, but he only cut off his right ear. Jesus, the Gospel of Luke tells us, reached down, took that right ear, and put it back on that man, and healed him. Now, that’s the setting. “*Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*” (John 18:11).

I want us to learn something from our Lord today. Because, dear friend, sooner or later under pressure, you’re going to face the same things Jesus Christ faced.

I. How Jesus Reacted to the Wrongs of a Friend

First of all, I want you to see how Jesus reacted to the wrongs of a friend. His friend was Simon Peter. Peter loved Jesus, and Jesus loved Peter. And, yet Peter wronged Jesus terribly on this day. What was wrong with what Peter did?

A. **Peter Had the Wrong Enemy**

Well, first of all, he attacked the wrong person. He had the wrong enemy. Here he comes with a sword against a man named Malchus and he cuts off his ear. Well, my dear friend, the problem there that day wasn't somebody's ear. The Bible says what? *"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). There was a spiritual battle. And, here's a man with a sword. He's got the wrong enemy.

So often the devil rejoices when we attack the wrong enemy rather than attacking the enemy, Satan himself.

B. **Peter Had the Wrong Weapon**

And, not only did he have the wrong enemy, he had the wrong weapon. The Bible says, *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal..."* (2 Corinthians 10:4). But, here he is with a carnal weapon. He is a man of God with a sword trying to do the work of God with a sword, the wrong weapon, cutting and slashing. That wasn't the weapon that's going to win this world.

My dear friend, let me tell you. We are in a cosmic battle against the martial, militant forces of hell. Do you think we're going to outgun them? Do you think we're going to outcut them? Outshoot them?

Communism, for example, is an idea. You can't kill an idea with a bullet. The only thing that will shoot down an idea is a better idea. And, that's the gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, he had here, dear friend, the wrong weapon.

C. **Peter Had the Wrong Energy**

And, then what does he have also? He has the wrong energy. He's working in the energy of the flesh. Rather than praying, he's been sleeping. And, now he awakens in the energy of his flesh to defend the Lord Jesus Christ. And he makes a terrible, horrible mess of the whole thing. Because, dear friend, you cannot do the work of God in the energy of the flesh. Do you know what he was doing? In his flesh, he was defending Jesus when Jesus wanted to defend him. If he had only prayed and sought the Lord.

D. **Peter Had the Wrong Attitude**

But, I'll tell you something else. He had he had the wrong attitude. He's angry and he's full of wrath. You have to be angry at a man to take a whack at him with a sword. The Bible says, *The wrath of man worketh not the grace of God.* How did Peter get in this mess anyway? The same way you'll get into it if you're not careful.

1. **He Was Arguing When He Should Have Been Listening**

Two things. Listen. First of all, Peter was arguing when he should have been listening.

The Lord Jesus had already told him. Peter ought not to have been taken by surprise. The Lord Jesus had already told him. Simon, I'm going to Jerusalem. I'm going to be crucified, suffer many things, be crucified, buried, raised again the third day. What did Simon say? Oh no Lord. You've got it all wrong, Lord. This will never be to you, Lord. No no, no. What did Jesus say to him? Jesus said, "...*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*" (Matthew 16:23).

Do you know what he was doing? He was taking the Word of God and parading it past the judgment bar of his mind. To him it didn't make sense, so he said it couldn't be. Don't ever do that with the Word of God. When God says it, if it doesn't make sense to you, it doesn't make any difference, dear friend. Don't argue with the Word of God.

2. He Was Sleeping When He Should Have Been Praying

How did he get in difficulty? Number one, he was arguing when he should have been listening. Number two, he was sleeping when he should have been praying. You'd expect him to get in trouble, wouldn't you? Because the two things he needed most for the fight were the Word of God and the power of God and they were missing. Because he did not receive the Word and he did not spend that time in prayer. So he wakes up and he joins in a battle. He becomes a religious fanatic, a religious zealot. The wrong enemy, the wrong weapon, the wrong energy, and the wrong attitude. He's a religious fanatic.

Did you know that the cause of Jesus Christ is hurt more by religious fanatics than it is by the true enemies of the cross of Christ? Did you know that? Hurt more in the house of her friends. Sometimes I'm listening to the talk radio program, going back and forth to work. And, they'll be discussing a religious subject. And, some get on the phone. And, they begin to talk. They have such a harsh, judgmental, and ill-informed attitude. And they use words poorly chosen and so forth. And, they go forth to argue. You see, your sword can be a verbal sword. It can be a financial sword. It can be any kind of a sword. People don't understand how to love and how to live as the Lord Jesus did—going out to defend Jesus in the strength of their flesh rather than letting their speech be seasoned with salt to show the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. Somebody said, "A fanatic is somebody who, having lost sight of his goal, doubles his speed." Do you know any people like that? Yeah.

a. Jesus Covered His Sin

All right, what was the reaction of Jesus to the wrongs of a friend? First of all, Jesus covered Peter's sin. He picked up that ear and he put it back. Now, Luke chapter 22 tells us about that ear, by the way. It's not in this text. But it's in Luke 22:50–51 says, "*And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And*

Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.”

Now, friend, if Jesus had not done that there may have been four crosses on that hill that day. I mean, Simon Peter was really in trouble. And, here the Lord Jesus comes to help him out of trouble. He covers, not condones, but he covers his sin.

Do you know later on Simon Peter wrote something. In 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 8 he says, Love covereth a multitude of sins.. He never forgot how the Lord loved him that day. Love covereth a multitude of sins. My dear friend we need to understand what it means to cover the sins of the failure and the failures of a brother or a sister in the Lord.

Do you know why people gossip? Gossips are people who love to uncover evil. You see, love covers. Gossip uncovers. I have no respect for a gossip and I don't trust them either. As a matter of fact, most of them are mentally deficient. They say, "You know me, I don't gossip." And, then they begin to gossip. Well, the person who does what he says he's not doing must be mentally deficient. I mean, he says, "I don't do it." And, then he turns right around and does it. Now, I'm going to tell you something, dear friend. The same person who will gossip to you will gossip about you. And, don't you forget it. Don't you forget it. And, it's no compliment to you that they want to use your ears for a garbage can. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. Gossip rejoices in iniquity. Love covers. It doesn't mean that it condones.

Noah got drunk. Made a spectacle and fool of himself. He was lying there naked and drunk. His son—Ham—came out and saw him and ran and got his brothers. And, said, "Come, look at Daddy." What a disgusting thing that was. Those two other brothers got a blanket and laid it over their dad to covered his nakedness and his shame. Love covers.

b. Jesus Confronted His Sin

Jesus covered his sin. I'll tell you what else Jesus did. Jesus confronted his sin. Jesus didn't just leave it alone. Jesus went to Simon Peter and he said to Simon Peter very clearly, "*Put up thy sword*" (John 18:11). Peter, you're wrong.

Dear friend, we must not only cover, but we must confront. We must care enough to confront. To cover is not to condone. When a friend is wrong we owe it to that friend to see him. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. That means I'll wound you in a loving way. I'll hurt to heal if necessary.

c. Jesus Cleansed His Sin

But, not only did he cover his sin and not only did he challenge his sin, but he cleansed his sin. Simon Peter became the flaming apostle of Pentecost. And, Jesus Christ—thank God—did not mistake the moment for the man. There came another day—hallelujah—when Peter took another sword and killed 3,000 on the day of Pentecost. Only he struck them alive, not dead, with a new sword. Jesus here is reacting to the

wrongs of a friend. And, he reacts in love. Some of the deepest hurts you're going to have in this life are when some of your closest friends fail you or misuse you or abuse you or hurt your cause.

II. How Jesus Reacted to the Wounds of a Foe

Secondly, I want you to see how Jesus reacted not only to the wrongs of a friend, but I want you to notice how he reacted to the wounds of a foe. Here was a man named Malchus. Again, Luke 22 verse 51 tells us of this man and how Jesus restored and Jesus healed his ear. Now, in that day they must have been amazed. In the first place, this man was a slave. There were so many slaves in the Roman Empire. One historian tells us that there were perhaps sixty million slaves. They were bought and sold like a piece of property in a garage sale. And, on top of that, not only was he a slave, but he was a part of that religious mafia that had come to kill the Lord Jesus. They had Jesus on their hit list. And, Jesus healed him. Why? Well, just keep your bookmark there in John chapter 18 and turn to Matthew chapter 5.

I want you to see what Jesus had said in the Sermon on the Mount. And, I want you to see how the Lord Jesus Christ practiced what he preached. Now, what did the Lord Jesus Christ preach? Look in Matthew chapter 5. We're talking about how to react to your enemies. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, verse 10, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake—That's what was happening to Jesus here. He was being persecuted for righteousness' sake—for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"* (Matthew 5:10–12).

Now, our Lord Jesus here speaks of persecution. And, he tells us we're going to be persecuted for two reasons. All right? I want you to check yourself right now.

A. The Life That We Live

Number one, we're going to be persecuted for the life that we live. That's righteousness' sake. You'll see it there in verse 10 it says, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake"* (Matthew 5:10). Why would people persecute you for righteousness' sake? You would think that people would honor you for being righteous. No. Let me show why you get persecution for being righteous. The word *righteous* comes from a root word which means to divide or to be different. And, this world doesn't want you to be different. The world thrives on conformity. If you'll be like the world, live like the world, talk like the world, laugh like the world, walk like the world then you'll get along fine. Listen to what Jesus said. Just stay in Matthew 5. But, just put this verse in your margin. John 15:19 Jesus says, *"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—are you listening?—therefore the world hateth you.” The world despises those who have come out and those who are not like it. You see, we’re different. We’re children of the light. They’re children of darkness. We are alive in the Spirit. They are dead in their sins. We live by faith. They live by sight. We understand them. They just don’t understand us.

And, dear friend, at every turn, we’re going to be rubbing them wrong. Remember what Jesus said? Jesus said, Take the narrow gate and the straight way. Because he said, “...*wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction...*” (Matthew 13:7). So Jesus said, There’s a narrow way and there’s a broad way. Right? You remember that? Well, where is the narrow way and where is the broad way? Don’t get the idea that over here is the broad way and over here is the narrow way, and they’re both running in the same direction. No, here is the broad way. And, let me tell you where the narrow way is. It’s right in the middle of the broad way, only it’s going this way.

Can you imagine yourself out on a superhighway going the wrong way against all the traffic? That’s what you’re doing as a Christian. I mean, everybody else is going this way and you’re going that way. They say, “What’s wrong with that guy?” I mean, “what is the matter with that guy?” And you’re headed this way.

The gospel of Jesus Christ starts at a different source. It follows a different course and it ends at a different time. You are a twice born person in a world of once born people and you’re going to be going against the tide all the time. If you live godly in Christ Jesus you’re going to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake. That’s the first reason.

B. The Lord That We Love

The second reason. Not only the life that we live, but the Lord that we love. Notice again in Matthew 5:11, “*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*” For Jesus’ sake. Now, you put those two things together—the life we live and the Lord we love—and that’s the way you’re going to get in trouble. That’s right. Now you can talk about God and nobody’s going to bother you. You can go to a civic club and mention the name of God and nobody’s going to say anything to you. But, you mention Jesus—pray in the name of Jesus and say that Jesus is the only way—and buddy, they’ll come down on you. Did you know that? Jesus said, “...*For my sake,*” (Matthew 5:11). That’s why you’re going to get into trouble.

Listen again to John chapter 15. Put this verse in your margin. John 15 verses 20 and 21. Jesus said, “*Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord—* The servant, that’s me. His Lord, that’s Jesus—*if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you—* He didn’t say they might. He said they will—*if they*

have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (John 15:20-21) Now the Bible says all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Philippians chapter 1, verse 29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Question: Are you suffering for Jesus? Second question: Why not? Has the world suddenly become so nice, is that what it is? All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. The life we live, the Lord we love. It makes us different, my dear friend. It is given to us to suffer.

Many who call themselves Christians don't suffer and if you were arrested for being a Christian, there wouldn't be enough evidence to convict you. They'd let you go.

No listen dear friend, we have to distinguish between suffering for our own faults and suffering for righteousness' sake. Jesus said it must be for false and it must be for His sake. You have to be able to differentiate between persecution and punishment. You see, we are punished by good people for doing evil. We are persecuted by evil people for doing good. Now, many times Christians suffer, and it's not for Jesus' sake, and they're whining and groaning and saying, "Oh well, I'm a Christian, I'm suffering for Jesus." Hogwash! They're suffering because of their stupidity, their ego, their messiah complex, their obtuseness, their brittleness, their abrasiveness, and all of these other things. You're not suffering for Jesus; you just brought it on yourself.

Jesus said—listen—it must be false and it must be for my sake. That's the kind of suffering that Jesus is honored by. Peter, later on, wrote about it. He said in 1 Peter, chapter 4, verse 14: "*If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part, he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*" Nothing glorifies him more than for you to suffer for His name's sake.

But, now listen He says, "*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters*" (1 Peter 4:15). Any busybodies here? If you're a busybody and you say, "I'm suffering for Jesus." No, you're not. You're just a busybody. He who sticketh his nose in verily shall find a fist on the end of it. Listen. He goes on to say, "*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf*" (1 Peter 4:16). Now, what are we to do? What did Jesus do? Here comes this band of people in to take him. These are his foes, and his enemies. How did Jesus react? He told us what to do here in Matthew chapter 5. And, it's what he did. Three things.

1. Reign in Life

Number one, he began to reign in life. To rule. Look if you will in Matthew 5:10. It says, "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake*—Now, look at this next phrase. Don't miss it. For theirs is the kingdom of what?—*for theirs is the kingdom of*

heaven.” Now, I live in a kingdom. I’m a kingdom man. All right, if somebody who’s not a kingdom man comes against me and he accuses me, abuses me, misuses me, and hurts me. And, I say, “I am going to get even,” what do I do? I leave my throne and I come down to where he is, and now I’m even. Do you really want to get even? You’re up here and he’s down here and you want to get even? That’s pitiful, isn’t it? You see, ours is the kingdom. Jesus Christ was in complete control in that garden. It wasn’t weakness. It was unbelievable power.

You see, there are three levels in life. There’s the hellish level. It returns evil for good. Then there’s the human level. Do you know what the human level is? The human kingdom? It returns good for good and evil for evil. And, then there’s the heavenly level, the Kingdom of Heaven. That returns good for evil. You see, you’re to reign from a throne. You’re to reign in life. Not the hellish level or even the human level, but the heavenly level. He says again in verse 10, “...*theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:10).

2. Rejoice in the Lord

Not only reign in life, but number two, rejoice in the Lord. Look in verse 12. It says, “*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad...*” (Matthew 5:12). Now, why should you rejoice and be exceeding glad? Why, I’ll tell you several reasons. First of all, they saw enough of Jesus Christ in you to want to persecute you. That’s a sign that evidently there’s something different about you, that you’re making a difference. Do you remember reading there in the book of Acts where they took those apostles and they beat them? Do you know what the Bible said? And, they said, “...*they should not speak in the name of Jesus...*” (Acts 5:40). The Bible says, “And they departed from the presence of the council...” (Acts 5:41). Now, listen to this. “...*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*” (Acts 5:41). I mean say, “hallelujah, I’m worthy. I’m worthy.” That’s one reason you can rejoice. I’ll tell you something else you can rejoice about. You can rejoice because of the company you’re in. “...*for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*” (Matthew 5:12). You’ll be like Isaiah. You’ll be like Jeremiah. You’ll be like Habakkuk, like Nahum. You’ll be like John the Baptist. “...*so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*” (Matthew 5:12). They didn’t get out unscathed. You’re in good company. I’ll tell you another reason to rejoice. For great is your reward in heaven. The Bible says, “*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...*” (2 Timothy 2:12). “*Rejoice,*” he says. Look. Reign in life, rejoice in the Lord.

3. Respond in Love

And, let me say the third thing that you’re to do. And, here’s what Jesus did. Respond in love. Now, you’re in Matthew 5. Just turn the page and go to Matthew 5 verse 43. “*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*”

But I say unto you, Love your enemies—Was Jesus doing that when he healed that ear? Sure he was. Love your enemies—bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43–44). That’s exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did. He responded in love. When Christians begin to do this, people are going to start believing what we preach.

Now, what does it mean to love your enemy? It doesn’t mean to trust him. The apostle Paul was writing a letter one time and he thought about a guy named Alexander who was a coppersmith. And, he said to his buddy, “hey, Alexander the coppersmith done me a lot of harm. Be thou aware of him.” That is, look out for this guy. Just watch him. He loved Alexander. But he said, “he’s done me harm. Just be thou aware of him.” It doesn’t mean to approve of them. It doesn’t mean to trust them. It does mean to love them. Do you know what this kind of love is? It’s not a sickly, syrupy, sentimental love. It is a love that says to my enemy, “I will for you the best.” And, I will do you good regardless of what you do to me. I will for you the best. Respond in love.

Do you do you think that Malchus ever got saved? I don’t know. But, I have a feeling in my heart he did. Do you know why he got saved if he did, and he may not have? But, I’ll tell you one thing. He was a lot more ripe for salvation than he was if somebody say, “pastor, I don’t have what it takes to live that way.” Well, join the club. I don’t either.

Conclusion

Now, listen. Here’s the secret of what we’re talking about, Jesus Christ. Are you listening? Please, everyone. Jesus Christ gave himself for us on the cross to pay for our sins. And, then he rose again to give himself to us that he might live his life through us. The same Jesus who reacted that way so long ago will react that way in you today if he’s there. If he’s not there, you’re just an imitation of Jesus. But, if he’s there, you can say, “The life I now live I live by the life of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” Isn’t that wonderful?

Now, when we begin to live that way the joy begins to come, the power begins to come, our loved ones get saved, our friends get reconciled, and God is glorified. That’s what I want. That’s what we want. Let’s bow in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. O my dear friend, if you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ, let me help you to find him today. No one stirring. And, I want everyone in this building who desires a supernatural life, everyone who wants the Jesus who gave himself for you to give himself to you, I want you to pray this kind of a prayer. If you want to be saved, you can get it settled right. You are in that seat. Pray this prayer. Dear God. That’s right. Just pray, dear God. I know that you love me and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. And, you promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Right now with all of my heart I trust you. I repent of my sin. I open my heart. I

receive you now as my Savior and Lord. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin and save me. Lord Jesus, thank you for saving me. I trust you to do it. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And, help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray.

The Finished Work of Calvary

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 22, 1989

Main Scripture Text: John 19:30

*“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said,
It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”*

JOHN 19:30

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Introduction

I want us to look at a wonderful verse, John chapter 19 and verse 30. Tonight we're going to be thinking of the finished work of Calvary. John chapter 19 and verse 30 the Bible says this, “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30). That is, He gave up His Spirit. Now, the ancient Greeks used to boast that they could say so much and yet say so little. That is, they would use a few words to express great meaning. They would give an ocean of truth with a few drops of words. And, this certainly our Lord Jesus did on the cross when He bowed His head and he said, “...It is finished...” (John 19:30).

Now, folks, that's only one word in the Greek language. It is anglicized various ways, I suppose perhaps the best way to pronounce *tetelestai* is finished. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ said on that cross. Now, I want you to be clear in the matter, that he did not say, “I am finished.” Jesus was not finished. I'm sure that the Pharisees smugly thought, well we've done away with Him, He's finished. I'm certain that perhaps even the demons of Hell howled with glee and they said, “Well, we have done Him in, He is finished.”

Even His disciples were disappointed and they said, “Well, it's all over now.” Many of them were perplexed and fearful. They thought He was finished. But, He did not say I am finished, He said, “...*It is finished*...” (John 19:30). It is done.

A. **It Is a Servant's Word**

Now, in order to understand the wonder of that word, I want you to see how that word was used in ancient history. And, first of all it was what I want to call a servant's word. When a servant would have completed a task, he would come back to his master and after it was done, rather than saying, “Well the job is over,” as we would say today in America, he would just simply say what Jesus said, “tetelestai.” That is, as a servant, I have done what you have sent me to do.

Now, Jesus Christ was only thirty-three years of age when he bowed His head and said, “tetelestai.” “...*It is finished*...” (John 19:30). But, at thirty-three He could say, “I have finished the work Father, that you gave me to do.” In John chapter 17 and verse 4 he said, “...lord it's done, I have completed everything that you've told me to do.” (John 17:4) So Jesus did not die ahead of time, Jesus did not die incidentally, or accidentally. Jesus died on the dot at the moment, He said, “no man taketh my life from me...” (John 10:18) . You see, the Bible says “...he yielded up the spirit” (Matthew 27:50). I've told you before that Jesus Christ was the only one who voluntarily died. None of us voluntarily die. We may choose the time of our death by suicide perhaps, but we cannot chose whether or not we're going to die. He was the only one who didn't have the sentence of death upon Him, yet He chose to die. He said no man “taketh my life from me, I give it up of myself.” “He yielded up the spirit.” The Bible says “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” Have you ever started anything you couldn't finish? I have. So many times I've started tasks and I was not able to finish them.

I heard of one man who said to another little boy, Jimmy said to Bobby, “Bobby, my Daddy said that he can whip your Daddy” and Bobby went home and told his Daddy. He said, “Daddy, Jimmy said that his Daddy can whip you.” And, so Bobby's Daddy went to see Jimmy's Daddy and Bobby's Daddy said to Jimmy's Daddy, “I understand you have a list of people that you can whip and my name is on that list.” And, Jimmy's Daddy said, “That's right! You Name's at the very top of that list” Bobby's Daddy said, “You can't do it. What are you going to do about that?” He said, “Well, I'll just take your name off the list.” I think there are a lot of us sometimes who start things we can't finish.

I'm so grateful that the Bible says, “Now, unto him that is able to perfect that which concerns us who's able to complete that which he hath started” Thank God for the finished work of Calvary. It was a finished word. It was a servant's word, to say, “I have done what the father gave me to do.”

B. It Was a Priest's Word

But, not only was this word, *tetelestai*, a servant's word, it was also a priest's word. The priest in this day had among the other assignments. They had the responsibility to examine the sacrificial lambs. They had to make certain that those sacrificial lambs were absolutely without spot or blemish. And, why did those lambs have to be without spot or blemish? Because those sacrificial lambs in the Old Testament were a picture of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. And, you know there could be no blemish, no sin in the Lord Jesus. And, when one of those priests would take those lambs—and as I have told you—they would examine every part of that lamb. They would look inside its mouth, examine the eyelids, look in the ears, look at the hooves, stroke the wool, and so forth. When that priest said that lamb is perfect, he would present it for sacrifice and you know what he would say? He would say, “tetelestai. It's perfect! It's perfect!” And, again I believe what the Lord Jesus was saying on that cross. He was our Great High Priest, offering himself. And, when he bowed His head, He said, “Here Father is a perfect lamb. It is finished.”

C. It Is an Artist's Word

I'll tell you another who person who used this word. Not only would a servant use this word when he'd completed a task and not only would a priest use this word, but an artist in this day would use this word. The people of Jesus' day—an ancient people—were great artisans. As a matter a fact some of the greatest art is not from this age, but that age. And, when the artist would have completed his masterpiece, when he had put the last stroke on, when it all made since, when it all came together, he would use exactly this same word, “tetelestai.”

Have you ever watched the man paint on TV? I can't tell you what channel it is but every now and then when I'm going through the channels with that thing which Joyce hates!—as a matter of fact the wives are organizing to take those things away from their husbands—but, every so often it'll come upon; I think he's on old German whose painting. Do you see that fellow? He says, “Utf, now I think I will put a little something here, you know that guy if you've ever seen him. He's incredible. He can paint a whole thing in just about an hour. But, every so often when I think it's looking just right, he'll take a big glob of black paint and he'll swoosh. I say, “Oh, he's ruined it!” I mean he has ruined it! But, then he just keeps on painting and then suddenly it just all comes into focus. And, I think that is incredible. How did he know it was going to come out that way?

I'm certain that the disciples could not understand the canvas that the Lord Jesus was painting. I mean so many things happen that they could not understand. When the Lord Jesus talked about the cross and Simon Peter said, “No Lord this will never be to you.” Jesus had to say, “Get thee behind me Satan, you don't understand, you savorest

not the things that be of god, but of men.” You don’t understand why I’m putting this stroke on the canvas. Even after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ—walking on that road to Emmaus—looked at those two perplexed disciples and he said, “Oh fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” But, dear friend, it all makes sense to us now. We understand that the Lord Jesus Christ, the master artist, was completing what He’d set out to do! And, that was the redemption of our souls. And, you know there in Ephesians chapter 2 the Bible says, “*For we are his workmanship...*” (Ephesians 2:10). That literally means we are His piece of art. That’s literally what it means. He put the last stroke on. He said, “It is finished.” The work that I have done for Adrian, this masterpiece now at the cross, hallelujah, tetelestai.

D. It Was a Merchant’s Word

It was also a merchant's word. It was used in business transactions. And, when a man would have paid his bill in full, rather than marking on the bill, paid in full, they just put again this word, tetelestai. It is paid in full, because on the cross with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood the Lord Jesus paid our sin debt.

The Bible says, “*the wages of sin is death...*” (Romans 6:23) and Jesus paid it all that also you and I might say hallelujah the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And, so dear friend, not one more thing can we do, not one iota of work can we do to add to our salvation, because it is paid in full. The Bible says in Romans chapter 11 and verse 6: “...and if by grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, and if by work, it is no of grace, other if by grace is no more of works and if by works it's no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace...” (Romans 11:6) What that simply means is you cannot mix grace and works. Jesus bought your salvation friend. He bought it completely. Jesus paid it all and all to him I owe. And, that’s what he meant among other things, when he said, “tetelestai.”

1. It Was a Judge’s Word

Not only was it a merchant's word, it was a judge's word. Back in this day when a man would be put in prison, what he had done, the charges against him were put on his prison door. And, he would be kept in prison for the allotted time that the judge had adjudicated him for and when he had paid his debt to society, they would write on that bill of charges against him. They would stamp on that bill, the same word “tetelestai.” That means he had paid the debt. He had paid the debt and therefore there are no more charges that the state could render against him.

You know the Bible says that the Lord Jesus in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 14 says, “that he took away the handwriting of ordinances that was against us” (Colossians 2:14). That’s what He’s talking about. The bill of charges that was against us, He took it away. He nailed it to His cross. He took that bill of charges that was against me and He

wrote across it, “paid in full” and just nailed it to the cross. And, I’ll never come into double jeopardy again.

Dear friend, let me tell you something, the devil doesn’t want you to understand that your sin debt has been paid in full. Many of still are haunted by the ghost of guilt and many of us are intimidated by the devil. The Holy Spirit does not convict you of sin that has already been forgiven. The devil may accuse you of it, but the Holy Spirit will only convict you of sin that you have not yet confessed not to condemn you, but to simply to get you to confess it. But, dear friend when you confess you discover that sin has already been paid in full by the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

E. It Was a Warrior’s Word

But, not only was it a merchant’s word, dear friend, it was a warrior’s word. When the battle was over, the warrior would come home and look into the face of his general or look into the face of his family. Whatever it was, when there was victory he would say, “It’s done, tetelestai, it is finished.” The victory is accomplished. And, brother Jim I always love that the singing Christmas tree, when that cross lights up and our choir sings, “It is finished, the battle is over.” That’s what the lord Jesus meant when he said in John chapter 12 and verse 31: *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”* (John 12:31). That is my battle with Satan is finished. I have won.

I. Prophecies Concerning His Death Were Finished

I want to tighten the focus a little bit. Just a little bit more and think about what was finished. Let me mention three or four things that were finished. Thinking about it being a servant’s word, thinking about it as being a warrior’s word, an artist’s word, whatever. Let me mention several things that were finished. Friend, prophecies concerning the death of our lord Jesus were finished.

Go back if you will to John chapter 19 and look at verse 28. It’s so amazing. It’s so beautiful. John 19:28 now, notice this, *“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth”* (John 19:28–29). Now, you get this? Jesus knowing that all things were fulfilled and yet there was one little thing that still needed to be done. There was just one detail. You see, He had to taste of vinegar, because what had the Bible prophesied in Psalm chapter 69 and verse 21: *“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”* (Psalm 69:21). And, that one little detail of scripture had to be fulfilled before Jesus could say, “It’s finished.” Isn’t that amazing? You see, He’s putting the last little stroke on this great canvass and Jesus is saying now it’s all done.

You see the ancient Egyptians; you know what they used to say when they would build their monuments and their great pyramids and all of these things. The Ancient Egyptians would say, "We build like giants, but we finish like jewelers." Now, that's what Jesus was doing on this cross, he was building like a giant. I mean He's buying our salvation. But, yet he's waiting just for one last small detail. Thank God for the fulfilled prophesy.

One of the great ways that you can know that the Bible is The Word of God is fulfilled prophecy, friend. There is absolutely no way to explain the Word of God not being the Word of God in the light of the fulfilled prophecy. If you were to read Psalm chapter 22 and we'll not do it tonight, but it reads like someone was standing at the foot of the cross describing the death of the Lord Jesus Christ hundreds of years before it happened. And, before death by crucifixion was even known of, he speaks of the piercing of His hands and His feet. He speaks of the words of His enemies, the tortures of crucifixion, and the gambling for His garments. It is incredible.

So, what was finished? All of the prophecies were completed when Jesus died. All of those prophecies that led up to His death, they were all culminated in that cross. That tells me something friend. The same God that fulfilled those prophecies is the God who is going to fulfill the prophecies concerning the second coming of Jesus, amen! Don't write those prophecies off. Don't explain them away and don't ignore them. His second coming is going to be as real, as actual, as literal, and as minutely fulfilled as was His first coming.

II. His Suffering Was Finished

I'll tell you something else that was finished. And, oh thank God, His suffering was finished because the Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is paid in full." Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus knew He had to pay? Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus anticipated the future? Have you ever thought how good it is that we don't know the future? Many of you foolishly. I would ask you, would you like to know the future? You say, "Oh yes I'd like to know the future." No you wouldn't! No you wouldn't! Do you think those people who's loved ones who were killed on that highway out there in California, you think they would've liked to have known that and lived all of their lives knowing that on a certain day their loved ones were going to be decimated and killed by that collapsing bridge? Oh no! They didn't want to know that. Would you like to know that three years from now a child in your family is going to get sick with leukemia and die? Would you like to know that ahead of time? Would you enjoy tonight if you knew that? Three years from now that would happen. No, you thank God you don't know the future. But, friend, Jesus knew the future.

The Bible says concerning the Lord Jesus, "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my*

youth up..." (Psalm 88:15). The Lord Jesus Christ knew the future, even as a child in Josephs Carpenter shop, he knew. I imagine that every piece of wood that Jesus handled reminded Him in of in some way of that ruffian cross that one day He would hang upon. Every time He drove a nail, it reminded Him of that hammer and that nail that would be driven through His Syrian flesh. The Lord Jesus, every time He went to a temple and saw those animal sacrifices He knew He was The Lamb of God.

Holman Hunt was a great artist and he painted a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as a youth. It's at the end of the day in the carpenter shop. The Lord Jesus has done His days work, the sun is setting in the west. The Lord Jesus is standing there in the doorway, His hands are upon the lintel of the door, the Lord Jesus is on his tiptoes, and He's stretching. Just a young man. You see the youth, the vitality of His body. But, there as the sun sets on the western wall of that Carpenter shop, you see the shadow of the cross. The Lord Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross. The anticipatory sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus knew that that cross was there. I think of dark Gethsemane.

I have been thinking more and more about Gethsemane the older I get. Before I used to think of the cross and the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, but the more I study the more I learn, even now it moves me. My heart is stirred by Gethsemane. I think I told you one time—years ago in a hotel room in Miami—I was studying Gethsemane. I read a sermon by a Scottish evangelist named John Lentil. The title of that sermon—I wish I had the book, I don't have it, it's out of print I believe—but the title of that sermon was this "What Happened in Dark Gethsemane?" As I read that night, passed midnight, alone in a hotel room, I think for the first time I really saw the horror of Calvary. I think for the first time I realized the price that Jesus paid. And, you know what I did? It was about one in the morning—maybe two—I shouted praise to God at the top of my voice." And, then I said, "Dear Lord what have I done? They'll come to arrest me. They'll think there's been a murder in this room. Thank God no one came, but I'm sure those on either side said, 'Oh my, what has happened in that room next door was just a Baptist preacher getting happy in the Lord thanking God for what Jesus did and what He faced.'"

Oh you can imagine dear friend after Jesus had baptized His soul in Hell for us, Jesus suffered the agonies. You see friend, it was not the physical cross that Jesus shrank from Jesus knew that on that cross not only would He be forsaken of the Father. Friend, He would become the object of the Father's loathing. God would have to look upon Him as He looks upon sin. He would have to consider Him the loathing, the judgment, and all of the viles of God's burning wrath against sin was poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And, in a finite period of time He suffered an eternity of Hell there upon that cross. Thank God, that it is finished, it is done. His sufferings were finished.

III. The Plan of Salvation Was Finished

Tell you what else was finished, oh my friend, the plan of salvation was finished. You see the Bible says, *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). And, when He died on the cross all that is necessary for you to be saved was done. Don't try to add your puny two bits worth of self-effort to what the Lord Jesus did on the cross. That's the reason dear friend I don't believe in what some call the sacrifice of the Mass or any other sacrifice. Friend, by one sacrifice He hath justified forever all of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's done. It is paid in full. These people who believe that you're saved by grace and works that's so ridiculous. They explain it this way, they say, “Well, it's not all faith, it's not all works, it's faith and works,” sounds so logical.

They say it's like crossing a stream in a rowboat. You pull on one ore, you call that faith, and you just go round in a circle this way. And, if you pull on the other ore, we call that works, you just go round in a circle this way. Faith and works, that just gets us across the stream. You know, one tragic flaw in that illustration. Friend, we're not going to Heaven in a rowboat. Let me tell you something, we're going to Heaven by the grace of God. It is finished. It is done.

Dwight L. Moody was a great evangelist, who lived in another era. He was the Billy Graham of his day and he was on a train one time and the engineer of that train was a religious man. And, he heard that Moody was on the train and he sent back word by the conductor and he said, “Why don't you get Moody to come up here in the cab and ride with me.” And, Dwight L. Moody went up in the cab and rode with that engineer. And, as they were riding along they discussed religion. And, this man talked about how he thought he was going to be saved by his ritual, by his good works, and by his commandment keeping and so forth! He also believed that Christ died on the cross, but he thought it was what Jesus did plus his works. Moody of course realized that when Jesus died He said, *“...It is finished...”* (John 19:30). Finally when they finished the end of that ride, Dwight I. Moody said, “I'll tell you the difference between your plan of salvation and the Bible way. The way I spell salvation and the way you spell it. You spell it do! I spell it done!”

Amen! That's it! Oh friend, if you depend upon works of any kind, for assurance of your salvation you'll never ever know that you're saved. But, when you knew that Jesus died on that cross, he paid in full your sin debt. It is finished.

IV. The Power of Satan Was Finished

I'll say one last thing and then I'll be finished. Dear friend, there's another thing that Jesus meant when He died on that cross and bowed His head. He meant, now is Satan's power finished. The power of Satan is finished. As I've told you in John chapter

12 and verse 31 He says, *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”* (John 12:31). And, then that text that we used last week, Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14 it speaks of the lord Jesus, *“...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death...”* (Hebrews 2:14). And, that is the devil. And, Satan now is a defeated enemy and because Jesus has won the victory—as a warrior—he can say, “It is finished.”

Now, Satan doesn't want you to know that he has been defeated. You see, the Lord Jesus did not defeat Satan as God. He defeated Satan as man. He came down here to Satan's sphere and defeated Him.

When I was a little boy I lived on Florida Avenue in West Palm Beach. I lived at the corner of Florida Avenue and End Street in West Palm Beach. And, catty-cornered across our street was another house that had a fenced in back yard. And, there was a boy over there who did not like me for whatever reason I cannot figure out, because I was very lovable. But, he did not like me. And, he and two of his buddies concocted an idea. They would get me over in that back yard and when they got me in that back yard, they would beat me up. And, so they put out a feeler for me to come on over and it was a ploy. So, I ended up in that fenced back yard with those three guys. Now, I'm going to do a little bragging. But, folks, when it was over I had whipped that boy in his own back yard and I never had any more trouble with him after that. Now, I don't believe in fighting boys and girls, but I'm just giving you a little history of what happened in that in that back yard. In that other guy's back yard I won the victory and I never had any more trouble with him. I want you to know friend that it was in Satan's back yard that Jesus won the victory.

Conclusion

Jesus came out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe and right into Satan's domain and there Jesus ripped the crown from Satan and there Jesus pulled the sting out of death. And, Jesus won the victory through death He destroyed him that had the power of death. That is the devil and said, “It's finished, it's done.” Satan hopes that you'll never ever learn the power that Jesus has over him and the authority that you have in the finished work of Calvary.

The Word That Shook the World

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 25, 1976

Main Scripture Text: John 19:30

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.”

JOHN 19:30

Outline

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- I. The Prophecies Concerning His Death Were Completed
- II. The Suffering Itself Was Finished
- III. God’s Way of Salvation Was Finished
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, if you will, this morning, and open to John chapter 19. We want to think today on “The Word that Shook the World.” John chapter 19 and verse 30: “*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.*” (John 19:30) Now, these three words, “*It is finished*”—*tetelestai* in the Greek—are one word. “*Tetelestai*,” Jesus said. “*It is finished.*” Just one word, but it was a word that shook the world, that echoed through heaven, and that devastated the foundations of hell. “*It is finished.*”

May we bow our heads in prayer. Our Father, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whose we are, and whom we serve, that thou wouldst anoint this message and this service with supernatural power. Father, I am keenly aware in my own heart and in my own life that if anything real and lasting and holy is done this morning, it will certainly be thy work through me, and not anything that I do. I know, dear Lord, that thou hast not promised to bless these puny outlines and illustrations and words that fall from my lips—not in and of themselves. But, Lord, thou hast promised to make us a blessing, to speak through us. Thou hast promised, dear Lord, to honor thy word. And, O God, we’re dependent this morning upon the Holy Spirit of God to bring conviction to our hearts. First, dear Lord, speak to me. And then, speak through me. We pray, Father, that Christians will be strengthened. We pray that the unsaved will be convicted and converted and drawn to confess Christ as Lord and Savior. Bless those who listen by means of radio and television. And, Lord, may everything that is done glorify and magnify the name of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Now, the ancient Greeks long ago used to boast in being able to say so much with so few words. They claimed that they could give an ocean of meaning in a drop of language. Well, truly, surely, that's what the Lord Jesus Christ did when He cried from the cross this one word: *"It is finished."*

You will remember that this took place when the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging there upon Calvary's cross, when darkness veiled the glowing face of the sun, and when the earth shook and trembled, and when the mountains rocked and reeled, and when Satan and all of the dark forces of hell were battering at the very gates of glory. And when Jesus Christ was dying in agony and blood, He bowed His head and said, *"tetelestai."* And I say that shook the very foundations of hell, and that had reverberations that echoed throughout heaven. And it was a word that shook the world: *"It is finished."*

Now, Jesus did not say, "I am finished." All of the demons in hell were howling in glee and saying, "Ha ha! He's gone! He's finished!" But Jesus didn't say, "I am finished." The disciples were mournful and brokenhearted because their leader, their Sovereign, their King, was dying ignominiously upon a cross. It was not that Jesus was finished. Jesus said *it* was finished. What was He talking about?

Well, I want you to notice some things that were finished, completed, when Jesus died upon the cross. For the word *finished* means "paid in full, completed, summed up," in essence.

I. The Prophecies Concerning His Death Were Completed

First of all, I believe that Jesus meant that the prophecies concerning His death were completed. You see, all of the Old Testament prophecies had two threads: one was the red thread of blood redemption; the other was the golden thread of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And I believe that Jesus Christ is thinking about those prophecies that talked about His suffering, His bleeding, and His dying upon the cross. And when Jesus said, *"It is finished,"* He meant these prophecies had been fulfilled. They'd been completed.

You'll get that if you'll look in John chapter 19, verse 30: *"When Jesus therefore..."*—now, whenever there's a *therefore*, see what it is there for—*"Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished."* What did He mean? Here was the one last prophecy that must be fulfilled. You see, notice in Psalm 69, verse 21: *"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."* (Psalm 69:21)

Now, you see, every jot, every tittle, every minutia of prophecy had to be fulfilled. And there was one little prophecy that had not yet been fulfilled. They had to give Him vinegar. And so, when they gave Him vinegar, Jesus said, "That's it. Every prophecy now has been fulfilled. It is now finished. It is finished." The ancient Egyptians used to

say, “We build like giants, but we finish like jewelers.” Now, isn’t it amazing that the gigantic work of redemption was done in such broad, powerful, awesome strokes, but yet the finest, most minute detail was put upon the canvas of redemption by the great artist, the Lord Jesus Christ? And as He put that last little stroke on the brush, He said, *“It is finished”*—“It’s done. It is completed. The prophecies are fulfilled.”

It is amazing—absolutely, indescribably amazing—as you study the prophecies that deal with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why, if you were to turn to Psalm 22, and read Psalm 22, it would sound as though it were written by a person standing at the very foot of the cross, and yet it was written centuries before the Lord Jesus Christ was born. In verse 1 of Psalm 22, you see the words of Jesus. Well, let’s just go ahead and look. Turn to Psalm 22. We won’t spend but a moment here. But I want you to see what God has done in this wonderful book as it prophesied the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer, bleed, and die upon the cross. All right, Psalm 22, verse 1: *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Psalm 22:1) These are the very words that Jesus Christ would utter from the cross. Notice verses 7 and 8: *“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeking he delighted in him.”* (Psalm 22:7–8) That’s exactly, precisely, minutely, what they said when Jesus Christ was there. They said, “Ha, if He be the Son of God, let God deliver Him.” My, what an amazing prophecy! Notice in verse 14—look in verse 14 of Psalm 22: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me.”* (Psalm 22:14) When they put the spear in Jesus’ side, out came water and blood. *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.”* One of the things that crucifixion does is to disjoin the bones.

Notice in verse 16: *“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”* (Psalm 22:16) Of course, we know that when Jesus Christ was nailed to that hellish cross, they put those searing nails through His hands and through His feet. But I want to remind you that Psalm 22 was penned when crucifixion, which was a Roman form of execution, was not even remotely thought of. The Jews of this day, when David wrote this psalm, exercised capital punishment by stoning—nothing about the piercing of the hands and the feet. But Jesus said: *“I am poured out like water...my bones are out of joint...they pierced my hands and my feet.”* (Psalm 22:14–16) Look in verse 18 of Psalm 22: *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”* (Psalm 22:18) Do you remember, as the Bible tells us in the Gospel of Matthew and other places, that the Roman soldiers gambled, cast lots, for his seamless robe? And here it is centuries and centuries and centuries and centuries before it took place. Jesus Christ gave us step by step, blow by blow, occasion by occasion, word for word, this graphic description of the crucifixion.

And right down to the minutest detail where *“they gave me vinegar to drink.”* (Psalm 69:21) And after they had offered Jesus a sponge filled with vinegar, Jesus then said: *“It is finished.”*

All right, what’s the lesson for us today? What’s the lesson for you today and for me today? Friend, listen. Just as surely, just as accurately, as the first prophecies concerning His first coming were fulfilled, just as surely, just as accurately, those concerning His Second Coming are going to be fulfilled. Amen? Amen! I tell you there are two threads: There is the red thread of blood redemption. There is the golden thread of His Second Coming. And if Jesus Christ fulfilled all of those first prophecies minutely, accurately, He’s going to fulfill those others. And so I believe that one thing that Jesus Christ meant when He bowed His head and said, *“tetelestai,”* He meant that the prophecies are finished. They are completely finished—those that dealt with His anguish and suffering there upon the cross.

II. The Suffering Itself Was Finished

But I want to say furthermore, thank God that the suffering itself was finished. And I believe that’s something else that Jesus meant when He said, *“It is finished.”* I believe He was saying, “The anguish, the heartbreak, of the cross has been finished.” I don’t believe that you and I in our wildest imagination can understand what Jesus Christ suffered upon that cross. I believe only the band in hell can begin to know what Jesus Christ paid upon the cross.

Don’t you understand that upon the cross of Calvary Jesus Christ paid for all of the sin, for all of the world, for all of time, for all of eternity, that any man, any woman, any boy, any girl would ever have to pay for sin? What I am trying to say is this: that if you and I were to die outside the Lord Jesus Christ, the just and righteous penalty that we would pay would be an eternity of separation from God—an eternity in hell. But Jesus Christ in six hours upon the cross suffered all the hell that you and I would suffer for eternity. How is that?

Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you and I, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. I believe that the eternities as well as the sin of the world were compressed upon the Lord Jesus Christ in that time. All of the sin of the world was distilled upon Jesus. He didn’t just take my sin, friend; He took our sin, the sin of the world. All of the adultery, all of the blaspheming, all of the rape, all of the murder, all of the hatred, all of the vileness, all of the immorality—it was all upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And it was upon Jesus Christ, in a sense, for all eternity. Jesus suffered an eternity of hell upon that cross.

You think of the anticipatory sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. *When I was a little boy, we disobeyed sometime. We’d go out for a Sunday drive. My brother and I would*

get in a fight in the back seat. My dad would say, “Boys, you’re going to get a spanking when you get home.” Well, that took the joy out of the Sunday afternoon, because when my dad said it, he meant it. And I tell you, the anticipation sometimes was worse than a spanking—just knowing. I mean, he said it; that was it, like the law of the Medes and the Persians—no backing up. You’re going to get a spanking when you home. You could just look forward to it. You could feel it all the way home.

Suppose you knew that in several years you were going to die of a horrible disease. I mean, suppose you knew it. Do you think you could enjoy now knowing that in several years this? I mean, you just knew beyond a shadow of any doubt. Suppose you were to take a little child and say to that little child, “When you get to be thirty-three, you’re going to die one of the most horrible deaths a man ever died—when you’re thirty-three.” You see, a lot of people say, “I’d like to know the future.” I, for one, am glad I don’t know the future concerning some things. God is good to us that He doesn’t let us know the future.

But the Bible says concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, as He gave a prophecy in Psalm 88:15, *“I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up,”* (Psalm 88:15) Jesus Christ anticipated His death. Jesus Christ knew that He was going to die. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah there were talking with the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know what they talked about? They talked about His death, His decease. When the Lord Jesus Christ was there with Simon Peter and He said, “Whom do men say that I am?” and Simon Peter said, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the living God,” (Matthew 16:15–16) Jesus said, “Blessed art thou Simon; for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17) And then He began to explain to them how He must suffer many things at the hands of the rulers, and be crucified and die and be raised again.

You see, the highest moments, even the most glorious moments, were overshadowed by the cross. I believe as a lad in Joseph’s carpenter shop, every time he took a rough-hewed beam, He thought of that cross. I imagine every time He saw a rose, He looked beyond it, below it, and saw the thorns, and He thought of that crown of thorns.

Holman Hunt, the great artist, has painted a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as a lad of about seventeen working in Joseph’s carpenter shop. It’s the end of the day, and Jesus, evidently wearied with the work, has come to the door of the carpenter shop, and He’s yawning, and He stretches Himself. And in the painting, you see the ruddy youth, the health, and the rippling muscles, and so forth. But the sun is setting in the west. And as you look on the western wall of the carpenter shop, this young boy just standing on tiptoes, stretching himself, really casts the shadow of a cross upon that wall. Jesus lived in the shadow of that cross.

I tell you, Jesus Christ anticipated His death. And Jesus Christ, every time He drove

a nail as a carpenter, thought of those nails that would be driven into His quivering hands. There were the anticipatory sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ as He suffered there upon the cross.

And I want you to see Jesus Christ as He's in the Garden of Gethsemane. The city sleeps. Even those disciples are asleep. But Jesus' eyes will not close in sleep until they close in death. Jesus cries, "*O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*" (Matthew 26:39)

I studied one night about the Garden of Gethsemane in a motel room in Miami, Florida, and God touched my heart as it's never been touched before. And I thought of the Lord Jesus Christ: yes, shrinking from the cross; yes, shrinking from the sin of the world; and yet, Jesus being willing to say, "Nonetheless, not my will, but thine, be done"; and Jesus drinking that bitter cup all the way down to the dregs for me. (Luke 22:42) I shouted, "Glory! Glory!" I shouted so loud I thought perhaps that the house detective would come and arrest me. I had no idea I was going to shout as I thought what Jesus had done for me.

And I thought of dark Gethsemane. Oh, the price my Savior paid in dark Gethsemane! And then Jesus Christ walked from Gethsemane upon the Mount of Olives across the brook Kidron and up there to Caiaphas' house for a mock trial. And as He crossed the brook Kidron, I imagine that it ran red with blood, because it was in the brook Kidron that the blood of the sacrificial animals was emptied out and carried away. And I see the Lord Jesus Christ as He looks down at the blood shimmering in the moonlight. And Jesus Christ, again, knows that before long He's going to be nailed to that cross. They give Him a mock trial, and then they begin to make sport of Him. (Matthew 26:30–68)

Herod's soldiers stripped His garments from Him, put a royal robe on Him, and spit in His face. They took reeds—clubs, really—and beat Him. They crowned Him with a crown of thorns. The Bible says they plucked the very beard from His face. (Isaiah 50:6) Can you imagine? They spit in His face. Isaiah said that His countenance, His visage, was so marred that He was not recognizable as a human being. (Isaiah 52:14) He looked like some sort of a hideous animal. His teeth were loosened. His blood was running through His nose—great raw places upon His face where they had actually pulled the beard from His skin.

They beat Him. They lacerated Him. Some psychopathic dungeon keeper who was probably a volunteer for the job laid the lash upon Jesus' back and stripped His back till it was like ribbons of flesh hanging from His back. Strong men would have died from the flagellation, the beating, alone. And then, they took that cross, that hellish machine, they laid it upon His shoulders, and up Calvary's hill He goes. So weak from the loss of blood, He stumbles and falls. And a crack in the lash of a whip, and He's up again, and

He stumbles again, until finally they force one named Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. And then, they stretch Him upon that hellish thing. Those nails are driven through His quivering palms and through His feet. He's there trying to breathe. He cannot breathe. He's dying of surcharged blood. He's dying of loss of blood. He's dying of shock. He's dying of suffocation. He is in agony and pain. Every nerve is a path upon which the feet of pain tread.

But Jesus does not cry. Jesus does not whimper now, because it was not the physical suffering that really redeemed us. This took place the first three hours. But then at midday the sun refused to shine, and the glowing face of the sun hid, and the shade of night and darkness was pulled. The veil was pulled across the sun, symbolizing the greater spiritual darkness that Jesus was in. And Jesus gave those words from Psalm 22: *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Psalm 22:1) And I tell you, artists cannot paint, and tongue cannot tell, lyricists cannot write in a song, words cannot describe the utter midnight, the blackness, the agony, the pit into which Jesus Christ descended.

Jesus Christ hung on that cross between God and man. Forsaken of God, deserted by man, alone, Jesus Christ died. Suspended between heaven and earth, Jesus died alone. Jesus said, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46) How can God forsake God? He did. God the Father forsook God the Son. God the Father—the Bible describes Him in these words: *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold ... iniquity."* (Habakkuk 1:13) And God could not look upon the sin that was upon His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And to be a sinner means to be forsaken of God. And since Jesus took my sin, He took my suffering, He took my shame, and He took my separation. He was separated from God the Father. And while men jeered and taunted, and God the Father turned His back, alone, alone, Jesus died on Calvary.

When David walked through the valley of the shadow of death, he could say, *"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."* (Psalm 23:4) But Jesus walked this lonesome valley all by Himself. But finally, finally, at the end of this time, when the price had been paid and Jesus had died—not only the physical death, but Jesus had suffered the spiritual separation from God the Father—He cried, *"tetelesta"*—"it's finished; it's done." I thank God He'll never suffer again. I thank God He'll never go to the cross again. But I want to tell once for all, forever and ever, He hath bought redemption for me and for you. *"It is finished"*—that's what He said.

III. God's Way of Salvation Was Finished

But I want to tell you, dear friend, not only were the prophecies completed, and not only was the suffering summed up; but I want to tell you, thank God, God's way of salvation was finished. God's mighty work of redemption was finished. When Jesus died, all that

was necessary for you to be forgiven and to be saved was done. There's nothing for you to do but to receive what Jesus Christ as already done, for *"It is finished."*

You see, that's why He came. Jesus said in Luke 19, verse 10, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke 19:10) And that's what He came for. Jesus didn't come as the great teacher. He didn't come as the great example. Jesus didn't come as the great healer. He came as the Redeemer. He came that your sins might be forgiven. Listen to it again: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* Paul put it this way: *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* (1 Timothy 1:15) And so it's done. Friend, there's nothing left for you to do.

One time, Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist—you kids don't remember it; I don't either—it is said that Dwight L. Moody took two continents and shook them toward God. An ignorant man, just a shoe clerk, he murdered the King's English, but he didn't disappoint the King of kings. He was a great man. One time, Moody was traveling on a train out in the West. And the engineer on that train learned that Dwight L. Moody, the evangelist, was on the train. And the engineer, who was a very religious man, sent word back and asked Moody if he would come up and sit in the cab with him and discuss the Bible. Dwight L. Moody went into the cab with this engineer, and they sat there as they were going out across the great plains of the West, and they discussed religion.

This man was a member of a false cult. And this man believed in salvation by works. And Moody, of course, believed as the Bible teaches: *"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."* (Ephesians 2:8–9) We're not saved by works. The Bible says, *"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* (Romans 4:5) And so, this man kept on talking about his religion of ritual and baptism and works. And Moody kept on talking about the blood of Jesus and the finished work of Calvary. Finally, when the ride ended, Moody said, "Let me tell you the difference between your religion and mine." He said, "It is just a difference of spelling. Your religion is spelled *do*. Mine is spelled *done*. It's the difference between *do* and *done*."

And, friend, that's the difference between any false cult and biblical Christianity. There's nothing for you to do. What you must do is to receive the finished work of Calvary. Jesus Christ said, *"It is finished."*

You know, back in this time, when a man was put in a Roman jail, they felt that every citizen owed his complete allegiance to Caesar. And if he transgressed any of the laws, actually, he was sinning against Caesar. Caesar was the deity. He was the emperor. And everybody had to say, "Caesar is Lord." And if he broke Caesar's laws, he had to suffer Caesar's punishment. And when they would take a criminal, they would put this

criminal in the jail. And then they'd take a piece of paper and they would write on this piece of paper all of the things he had done against Caesar. They'd just write them out. And then they would write the sentence—how long he would have to stay in jail. Then, they'd take a hammer and a nail, and they would nail it right to the door. And there it would be. There would be the crimes he committed, and there would be the sentence that he would have to fulfill. And he would stay there until he had paid to the uttermost—till he had completed his punishment. And when he did, they would take it to the judge, and the judge would write a word across this entire thing. Do you know what word he would write? The same word that Jesus said from the cross: *tetelestai*. That means “paid in full; it is finished.” And this man would take that. That would be given to him. And anytime they tried to arrest him again for the same crime and put him in double jeopardy, he'd pull that out. You see that? “Paid in full”—“paid in full.”

I want to tell you, dear friend, you and I are the sinners. You and I are the criminals. You and I are the ones that had the sentence executed against us. But Jesus Christ took it out of the way. He nailed it to His cross. And it is written: *“It is finished.”* Every stain, every blot, every blur, and every blemish that ever came across your soul: *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18) For *“It is finished.”*

I feel sorry for these folks who are trying to work their way to heaven. You know, I'm amazed these people don't believe in the eternal security of the believer. They don't believe in salvation by grace through faith. They believe in salvation by grace plus works. *Friend, I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I've ever lived to get me to heaven, much less the worst*—and there have been some bad ones. I wouldn't trust the best. How silly, how foolish, that we want to add our puny two bits worth of self-effort to the finished work of Christ on the cross!

Billy Sunday, he was a great evangelist like Dwight L. Moody. And Sunday had a tent crusade. One time, they had a big tent, and Sunday was preaching in the tent. And the tent crusade was over, and they were closing up the tent, and closing up the tabernacle, and turning out the lights. And a young man who had been in the meeting came and found Mr. Sunday, and he'd gotten under conviction, and he'd left without coming forward during the invitation. And then, he'd gotten under conviction, and he turned around and came back. He found Mr. Sunday in there, one of the last ones about to leave, and he ran up to him, almost out of breath, and he said, “Mr. Sunday, don't leave! I want to be saved! Tell me what must I do to be saved!” Sunday said, “You're too late.” “Oh, no!” he said, “I didn't come forward. But I'm not too late.” He said, “Yes, you're too late.” “No,” he said, “please, Mr. Sunday, tell me what must I do to be saved.” He said, “You're too late to do anything. Jesus has done it all. All you need to do now is to receive what He has done.”

Oh, it's not what you do, friend; it's what He has done. It's spelled *d-o-n-e*—*tetelestai*—“it is finished.” And I want to tell you Jesus Christ has purchased your salvation. It's paid for.

IV. The Power of Satan Was Finished

The last thing that I want to say: Not only were the prophecies completed; not only were the sufferings completed; not only was the plan of salvation completed; but because of all of that, bless God, the power of Satan was finished. The power of Satan was finished. *“It is finished”*—the power of Satan. You see, Jesus Christ, anticipating the cross, said in John chapter 12, verse 31, *“Now shall the prince of this world be cast out”*—who is the prince of this world? The devil—*“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”*—John 12, verse 31.

When was Satan cast out? At Calvary. When did Satan lose his dominion? At Calvary. Let me give you a good verse. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14—the Bible speaks of Christ, *“that through death [destroyed] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* (Hebrews 2:14) Jesus, when He died, destroyed the one who had the power of death—that is, the devil. Jesus destroyed the devil at Calvary.

You say, “Now, wait a minute. If Jesus destroyed the devil, who is that giving me so much trouble?” Well, the Bible says, *“through death he [destroyed] him that had the power of death.”* And the Bible says, *“Now is the prince of this world cast out”*—thinking of Calvary. (John 12:31) Well, how come the devil is still going around today? You see, the devil is now a defeated enemy. In Hebrews 2:14, when it says, *“He [destroyed] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,”* the word *destroyed* does not mean “to annihilate.” But it means “to render helpless.” That's precisely what the word means, and it's used other places in the Bible to mean that. It means “to render powerless.”

What happened is this: that Satan was rendered helpless and powerless there at the cross by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It means “to make of no effect,” if you want it just precisely: *“that through death he might [make of no effect] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* Satan is a defeated enemy. His sentence is already passed, and he has no power but what you and I allow him to have, because the Bible says, *“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) Jesus said, “I give you authority over all the power of the enemy.” (Luke 10:19) And Satan is a defeated foe. He has no power in my life but what I allow him to have.

Sometimes young people ask me questions like this: “Brother Rogers, who's the strongest: God or the devil?” The question is ludicrous. God simply allows the devil to do certain things today. In a way, the devil is God's messenger boy just to bring blessings to us. And we've got to be overcomers, and we've got to have someone to

overcome, so the Lord leaves him here. But it's all already done. The victory is ours. We don't pray for victory; we pray from victory. The victory was won at Calvary. Who is the strongest: God or the devil? Listen. When Jesus was on the cross, He said, "I could pray to the Father; He'd send me twelve legions of angels." (Matthew 26:53) That's 144,000 angels. And you'll find out, at the end of time, when God gets ready to deal with the devil, the Bible says in the book of Revelation an angel—one puny, measly angel—comes and puts Satan in the bottomless pit—an angel! (Revelation 20:3) Why, the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 14 we're going to look upon Satan: "They that look upon him narrowly shall say, Is this the one that made the nations to tremble? Is this the one that brought the earth to ruin and desolation?" (Isaiah 14:16) We're going to be amazed when we see how weak Satan is.

Some of you Christians let the devil beat up on you. Do you know it's time you stopped it? *Some of you, the devil has whipped you so long, you're just like that cat who had his tail stepped on so many times that when anybody would walk in the room, he'd just turn around and wait.* Don't you know that Jesus has given you victory? Don't you know that? I mean, He has given you victory! He said, "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." Some of you just say, "Well, I'd be glad enough to have a Mexican stand-off. Satan, you leave me alone; I'll leave you alone." No! Either you get him, or he gets you. The Bible says, "*Draw [near] to God, and he will draw [near] to you.*" (James 4:8) "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7) The power of Satan is finished—"that through death Jesus made of none effect him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

They put Samson in the great arena, that great temple there, to make sport of Samson. In the pagan temple, poor Samson, blinded, fettered, chained, they put him between two pillars. Samson said, "If you don't mind, just put me between these two pillars right here." And then Samson bowed himself as God gave him his strength back and he pushed those two pillars out, and the whole temple fell in upon his head and upon their heads. And while they thought they were making sport of Samson, actually Samson through death destroyed them that had the power of death. (Judges 16:29–30)

There are two mighty pillars in the temple of sin: one is sin; the other is death. And Jesus upon the cross pulled down the pillars of sin and death, and pulled the whole thing in upon the heads of the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of sin. But up from the rubble on the resurrection, Jesus came. On the third day, he was raised from the dead. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Conclusion

And I want to tell you, friend, this morning, if you want to be saved, you can be saved. If you want God to give you a new life, He'll give you a new life. If you want power over

Satan, you can have it. Because *tetelestai*—“*It is finished.*”

Every Christian's Job

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 18, 1996

Main Scripture Text: John 20:21

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

JOHN 20:21

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding John chapter 20. And we're going to look at one verse and then another—well, we're going to look at a lot of verses after we look at this one verse. But I just want to use this one verse as a starting place.

Now, I entitled the message tonight, "Every Christian's Job." But since Brother Jim has led us in singing and thinking about heaven and the assurance of salvation, I could just as well entitle this message, "Getting People Ready for Heaven."

John 20, verse 21: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you—and now here's the great, incredible statement, one of the most important, in my estimation, from the mouth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"—"as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." In plain English, we are to be doing what the Father sent Jesus to do. What the Father required of Jesus, Jesus requires of us. And when we will be all to Jesus that Jesus was to the Father, Jesus will be all to us that the Father was to Him. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you."

Now, Jesus was speaking to all of the disciples. But what Jesus says to all of the disciples He says to each of the disciples. And what Jesus said to all of the disciples, so long ago, He says to each of the disciples here tonight. So I want you to imagine the Lord Jesus Christ looking right into your eyes. Well, Brother Paul, come over here. I want you to imagine Jesus looking right into your eyes as I'm looking into Paul's eyes,

and saying, “as my Father hath sent me, so send I you.” Now, I want you to hear Jesus saying that to you tonight. Not just somebody saying something to everybody, but I want you to imagine the Lord Jesus looking right in your eyes and saying to you; not to the church in general, although He says it to the church in general, but what He says to all He says to each. What He said then He is saying now. And if you’re a child of God, and you were one of those who said, “Amen, I know I’m going to heaven,” this is for you: “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

Now, with that in mind, let’s think of some things that were true about Jesus that ought to be true about me and for about you.

I. His Mandate Is Our Mandate

Number one: His mandate is your mandate. Now, what was His mandate? What did the Father send the Lord Jesus Christ to do? Well, 1 John chapter 4 and verse 14: “And we have seen, and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” What was the mission of the Lord Jesus? He didn’t come as the great teacher. He didn’t come as the great financier. He didn’t come as the great politician. He came to be the Savior of the world. His was a mission of salvation. The Bible says again in Luke 19:10: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” Again, you might put down in your Bible John 3, verse 17: “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” And so, what is the mandate of the Lord Jesus? What mandate did the Son have from God the Father? It was, “My Son, go on a mandate to get people saved.” What is the mandate that I have tonight? What is the mandate that you have? It’s the same mandate that Jesus had, and that is the salvation of souls. And so, the Bible says, in Psalm 126 and verse 6: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” That’s my job. That’s my duty. That is my opportunity. Daniel chapter 12 and verse 3: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”

Now, I’ve been watching the primaries, and I’ve been watching the Iowa Caucus, and I’ve been reading all of that, and I confess that I’m very interested in all of that. But you let Congress run the nation. Let the President be elected, whomever he may be. You let the basketball players and the football players and the tennis players and all of that do their thing, and I’m not against that. I enjoy watching all of that. You let the Hollywood stars have their fame. Let the financiers run Wall Street. But I’m going to tell you something. If you are smart, you’ll be a soul winner. You’ll be a soul winner. I’m telling you, folks, if you’re going to heaven, you’d better start investing your life in the only thing else that’s going to heaven, and that is the souls of men.

Now, the mandate that Jesus had from the Father is the mandate that we have from the Father, and that is we're to be getting men, women, boys and girls ready for heaven.

II. His Mission Is to Be Our Mission

Now, not only is His mandate ours, but His mission, therefore, is to be ours. The mandate tells us what the mission was. Now, Jesus literally had a four-fold mission. First of all, Jesus came to reveal God the Father. In John 14, verse 9: "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And the Bible says that Jesus came into this world to manifest the Father. Now, that was the mission of the Lord Jesus, and that is my mission. I'm to manifest the Lord Jesus, who manifests the Father. In some measure, my job is to reveal God in Christ.

A little boy asked his father, he said, "Daddy, how big is Jesus?" Well, he said, "Well, son, I really don't know." He said, "Well, are you bigger than Jesus?" He said, "Well, no, son, I don't guess so." He said, "Well, would Jesus be your size?" He said, "Well, maybe so, son." He said, "Well then, if I ask Jesus into my heart, He'll stick out, won't He?"

Well, friend, if Christ is in your heart, it will show. Jesus came to reveal the Father, and my mandate is to reveal the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ. So it's my job, my duty, my joy, not only to spread the gospel, but to exemplify the gospel.

Now, He came to reveal the Father. He came to redeem men. Again, I'll give you this verse, Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And, 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 15: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." He didn't come as the great healer even, or miracle worker. He came to save sinners. He came to reveal the Father. He came to redeem the lost.

He came to raise up the church. That's another reason Jesus Christ came—to raise up the church. He says in Matthew chapter 16 and verse 18: "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church..." He came to build the church. Not the church building—the church! We are the church! And so, His mission is to be my mission: to reveal God, to redeem men, to raise up the church. If you love the Lord Jesus, you're going to love what the Lord Jesus loves, and He loves the church.

And then, He came also to ruin Satan. He came to bring Satan's kingdom crashing down. And you and I are to be soldiers. You see, the Bible says, "For this purpose was the Son of man manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

III. His Method Is to Be Our Method

Now, His mandate is to be my mandate. His mission is to be my mission. And then, His method is to be my method. Now, what was the method of the Lord Jesus, as He came

with the Father's mandate, and undertook this four-fold mission? What was His method? Well, His method was incarnation. That is, He took upon Him flesh. Listen to this scripture—Philippians chapter 2 and verse 7: “But he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” Now, Jesus had become a human so He could come down here in flesh and make contact with us. He didn't stay up there in heaven and try to dispense salvation in some sort of a package that might come down from heaven. He came to where we are! Now, that is His method, and that is the method today. We need to take the truth that I'm preaching tonight, and we need to incarnate that truth. God's methods are men and women. And, our Lord didn't wait for us to come to Him. We could not come to Him, so He came to us where we are. He took human flesh, came down here, and dwelt among us. That was His method.

Now, we have a beautiful facility here at Bellevue Baptist Church. This is a wonderfully beautiful place. I've preached in many churches, and I want to tell you—and I don't want to say it boastfully, but I want to say it thankfully—there's no place just quite like this one. It is a beautiful, wonderful, lovely facility. But don't ever get the idea if we'll just build a facility like this, and have music like this, and have a wonderful program, we ought to expect the lost to come and get saved. You study the Bible, folks, and I'm going to tell you something. You will not find one shred of Scripture that commands a lost person to go to church—not one! Never is a lost person told to go to church. Over and over again, the church is told to go to the lost. Isn't that what Jesus did? He came down from heaven. His was incarnational evangelism. We ought not to think it strange that they don't come to church. I mean, folks, it's hard for us to get to church. Admit it! I didn't even get my nap this afternoon. It's hard for us to get to church, and especially if you've got little tykes, little ankle-biters. It's so hard.

I remember when ours were little, trying to get ready, get up, and get them there on Sunday. I've told you this before. Time we got there on Sunday, we needed to be there, because we lost our religion getting there! It's a job. It's harder to get ready, get the kids ready, and off to church on Sunday morning than it is to get them off to school on Monday morning. I don't know why that is, but that is generally true. It's just difficult to get to church on Sunday morning. And, folks, we want to come. We desire to come. What about those who have no desire to come? We ought not to think it strange that they don't come. His method is our method. And what was His method? He came to where sinners were, and He commanded us to go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in. And there are thousands of people, there are thousands of people—listen—there are thousands and thousands of people in this very city who would be saved, if you would go to them, and share Jesus with them. Now, if you say that's not true, you know what it tells me about you? You have never been

going. You do not know. I'm telling you that there are people who are hungry, there are people who are waiting, and they will be saved. Now, you would have been, if somebody had come to you, and somebody did come to you—somewhere, somehow. And these others are the same. So, over and over again, the Bible tells us to go. Really, you can put the Bible in two verbs: come and go. Come to Jesus, and then go into the world. That's what it's all about.

Now, we're to go not to preach the gospel at people, but to share the gospel with people. It is incarnational evangelism.

You know what's wrong with many of us? We think we have served the Lord when we come to church. I think I told you about Fred Sampson, an eloquent black preacher. He said, "I went one time in the summer to spend the summer with my granddaddy." He said, "I lived in the city. My granddaddy was a farmer." And, he said, "I was so excited I was going to go out and help granddaddy farm." And so, he said, "They go to bed very early, and they get up very early." And he said, "Very, very early—it was still dark; the sun wasn't up—my granddaddy came and got me out of bed." He said, "The floor was cold, and everything else, but he said, 'Come on, son, we've got things to do.'" And said, "We went out there, and we milked the cows, and we fed the chickens, and we cut some wood, and started the fires going in the wood stove, and just did all of this stuff." He said, "Oh, it was a lot of work." Then, he said, "We came in and had a big breakfast." And he said, "After the breakfast," he said, "I was just heading back to my bed and my granddaddy said, 'Son, where are you going?'" He said, "I'm going to bed." He said, "All this work has made me tired." "Oh," he said, "son, we ain't done the work yet." He said, "What we've been doing is the chores." He said, "The work is out in the field."

Now, folks, we come to church. This is just the chores. This is just the chores. This isn't the work. The work is out in the field. We're just doing the chores here on Sunday.

I have a preacher friend, and he has signs, as you leave the church campus, just as we have welcome signs, on the backside of his welcome signs—you know what it says? "You are now entering the mission field." As you leave the church grounds, "You're now entering the mission field." Maybe we ought to do that here. As we leave here, we're going out into the mission field. The mission field is where we work. And what was the method of the Lord Jesus? It was incarnational evangelism. And, the reason that we don't do, very frankly, is—I don't think we are—we are a dry-eyed church; a dry-eyed church in a hell-bent world. We need to see these people as Christ sees them. When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion.

A little boy used bad English one time in front of his dad. His dad was a preacher. And, they asked the little boy to go somewhere. He said, "I ain't going." His dad said, "Son, that's not correct. Now, you listen to me, son. I am not going; you are not going; he is not going; we are not going; you all are not going; they are not going. Do you have

that correct, son?” He said, “Yeah. There ain’t nobody going!” And that’s the way the church is. I mean, really, a church this size ought to see five or ten times as many people brought to Christ as we see brought to Christ. But we have the idea that we’ve done God a favor if we come here and sit down on Sunday morning and listen to a sermon and sing. We call that serving the Lord. But remember what I talked to you about—Monday morning religion? Folks, what was the method of the Lord Jesus, who said, “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” His method was incarnational evangelism. He took the message where people are. And He did it because He was moved with compassion. Remember Psalm 126 and verse 6: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

May I ask you a personal question? Don’t answer it out loud. But when’s the last time you wept over a lost soul. Remember, you know what the apostle Paul said in Acts chapter 20 and verse 31: “Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Jeremiah, as he looked at the lost of his day, said, “Oh, that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people? That is, for those who have died without Christ.

IV. His Message Is to Be Our Message

Now, His mandate is our mandate. His mission is to be our mission. Folks, His method is to be our method. And His message is to be our message. Now, let me tell you about the message of the Lord Jesus. Did you know about the Lord Jesus, that He was easy to understand—that is, if you wanted to know the truth? The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, the common people heard Him gladly. You didn’t have to carry a dictionary when Jesus was preaching. Jesus’ preaching was very simple, very direct, very easy to understand. Every now and then, you might hear some man preach, and you don’t understand what he’s saying. And you say, “Well, boy, he must be deep. I didn’t understand it.” Just because a river’s muddy doesn’t mean it’s deep. The Bible says, concerning the message of salvation, that it’s very simple. The Bible says, “A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” Now, what that literally means, He’s talking about the gospel road. “A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” That means a stranger without good sense can find his way on the gospel road. Well, you think about it.

Does God want people saved? Of course, He does. Has God put His instructions in the Bible? Of course, He has. Now, if your child were lost, and you could get a note to your child, you could get a letter to your child, you could get a message to your child to tell your child how to come home, would you make it complicated, or would you make it

plain? You'd make it as plain as you could. If you had a child that was lost, you would make it very plain.

Now, let me tell you this about the gospel: the gospel is simply glorious, but it is gloriously simple. It is not so high that few can reach up to it; it may be so low that some will not get down to it, for the Bible says, "God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and he hath revealed them unto babes." And what we need to do, folks, is to give the simple, glorious message of Jesus Christ. And, again, there are thousands of people who will respond to the simple message of the gospel. The gospel is so incredibly simple—not simplistic—but simple, clear, plain, sweet. You don't have to have, be a PhD to understand it. Most people are not PhDs. God loves common people. And, as Billy Sunday said, "Put the cookies on the lower shelf." He said, "Feed my sheep, not my giraffes." Charles Spurgeon, a great intellect, said, "I don't want to be famous for anything except for preaching the old gospel." And so, what you need to do is to learn the simple, sweet, glorious message of the gospel.

What was the message of Jesus? Read the third chapter of John, and find the message of Jesus. Again, glorious simple; simply glorious—plain, wonderful truth! And the world is hungering for this truth. His message is to be our message.

V. His Motive Is to Be Our Motive

And then, His motive is to be our motive. What motivated the Lord Jesus Christ as He was getting people ready for heaven? I thought about this. And His motive really was four-fold.

First of all, He was motivated by obedience. God the Son was obedient to God the Father. Again, I want to read from Philippians chapter 2, verses 7 through 9. It speaks of Jesus, who "made himself of no reputation." And, by the way, the reason that some of us don't witness is we're afraid it's going to ruin our reputation. We're afraid of what people are going to think about us. Jesus was not concerned with that. He was concerned with the lost. You know, I'm so blessed we have some men in our church, and ladies, too, who have reputations. We have some high-powered businessmen. We have some medical men. We have some bankers, and others. And they'll just go out to the airport, up and down the streets, or wherever, just telling people about Jesus. I appreciate that about professional men. Not that they're more important than somebody else, but so often we have people, you know, they think that they can't lower themselves. They can't soil their reputation by going out like that. Somebody might think they are a fanatic. Jesus made Himself of no reputation, "...took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." What motivated the Lord Jesus? Obedience—obedience.

Now, if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Christ, may I tell you this: you're disobedient. You say, "Well, God didn't call me to be a soul winner; God called me to be a teacher." Or, "God didn't call me to be a soul winner; God called me to be a musician." Or, "God didn't call me to be a soul winner; God called me to be ta-da-da-ta-da-ta-da." There's nothing wrong with you that a good dose of salvation or an old-fashioned revival wouldn't cure. I'm telling you, folks, God has called all of us, and God has called each of us. And, again, I want you to think of the Lord Jesus Christ putting both hands on your shoulders, looking in your eyes, as I looked into the eyes of Paul, and saying to you tonight, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Now, if you're not doing this, you're not just missing a blessing. Listen to me. You're guilty of high treason against heaven's King. Amen? Okay. He was motivated by obedience.

Secondly, He was motivated by love. I see the Lord Jesus there on the Mount of Olives as He is coming over the brow of Olivet and going up to the temple. And He saw the temple there. He saw the beautiful, the city golden, Jerusalem. And He begins to weep copiously great salty tears, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stoneth them which are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy chickens, thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Jesus was motivated by love. His great heart was broken. He was moved with compassion.

Do you love the lost? Are you motivated by love?

But I'll tell you what else He was motivated by. He was motivated by necessity. Jesus Christ knew that it was absolutely, totally necessary that He fulfill His mission. He said in John chapter 3, verse 17: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." You see, God had no other plan. Had Jesus not obeyed, had Jesus not fulfilled the Father's mandate, there was no backup plan. And I want to tell you this: that God has no backup plan for evangelizing the world. He has committed that to us! Not to angels, but to us! And if we fail, He has no other plan. There is no redundancy, no backup. And we're only one generation away from paganism, if we don't hand it on down to the next generation.

Jesus was motivated by obedience. Jesus was motivated by love. Jesus was motivated by necessity. And Jesus was motivated by joy. Listen to Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2. The Bible says we are to be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." What was the joy that was set before Him? You! What did the apostle Paul say about those people that he had led to Christ? He said in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 19: "For what is our hope, our joy, or our crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Paul said, "What is going to be my joy when Jesus comes?" We're saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Paul said, "My joy

is going to be those that I brought to Christ.” Must I go and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so? Without one soul with which to greet Him—must I empty-handed go?

Folks, if your joy is lacking, let me suggest that you get on the trail for souls. If your joy is lacking, if this thing is getting dull to you, then let’s go forth and bring souls. Remember again, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Soul winning is like farming. You bear precious seed. The seed is the Word of God. You water the seed with your tears. Not every seed will sprout, but some will. You go, you scatter seed; after a while you’re going to win somebody to Jesus Christ.

I remember reading a story about Jim back in the Civil War. He was one of these southern boys who wasn’t trained in the military arts, but he knew how to hunt. He had his rifle that he looked down the barrel of that rifle, and killed many a deer, many a squirrel. And old Jim was in the Confederate Army, and there was a skirmish there. And Jim got separated from the rest of the group. He was out there by himself. And they couldn’t go back and rescue Jim, and he was out there where the battle was real hot and fierce. And, after a while, Jim was seen coming back. And in front of him he had about six prisoners with their hands up, marching them back toward his ranks. Everybody was so happy to see Jim. And then, they saw what he had done, had all those Union soldiers. They said, “Jim, that’s wonderful. That’s wonderful, Jim. Where’d you get them?” And old Jim felt they’d deserted him. He was kind of mad at them. He said, “The woods are full of them. Go out and get some for yourself.” And, folks, that’s the way it is with lost sinners. They’re out there. They’re out there. And when you come for yourself, seeing people saved, you will get such a joy.

Let me tell you, when we give the invitation down here on Sunday morning, we’ll see it just like I saw this morning. You see souls come down here, but then you’ll see somebody else come. I saw one this morning. She came down. She went with joy to follow up a loved one that had come down here to give his or her heart to the Lord Jesus. I saw a mom over here about a year ago, when her son got saved—big old boy, about 6’2”, gave his heart to the Lord. And I saw that mama let out a war hoop right over there, and she just shouted, and got up, and I saw, you know how our counselors do down here? Somebody was trying to shake her hands. Boy, she looked like a running back for the Steelers. She just went right past him, going there to put her arms around that boy that she’d been praying for, wanting him to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You want joy? Get involved in lost souls. Listen. I get more joy—I say this—I get more joy out of seeing a soul saved than I got when I got saved. Why? Because I know more of what’s happening to him. I didn’t understand all that was happening to me.

I may have told you about a man that Joyce and I witnessed to for three or four, maybe five years, maybe longer than that. He was a Jewish man, a professional man, a

doctor. And we shared with him, and witnessed to him, and loved him, and ate with him. And I'd go to basketball games with him. And I'd share Jesus with him. And, he'd say, "Now, Adrian, you know who I am. You know ta-da-ta-da-da. Now, just don't always be talking to me about that." I said, "Irving, I want you to know Jesus." He said, "Now, it's different with me." I said, "No, it's not. I want you to be saved." And this went on for a long time. And then, he said, "Hey, don't be always talking about that." I said, "All right, but I want you to know when I'm not talking about it, I'm thinking it." And so, we just had this kind of a relationship.

One day, he had a heart attack. He was in the hospital. I went up to the hospital to see him. He said, "Adrian, I heard you preach a funeral." He said, "That was beautiful what you said about heaven." I said, "Irving, Irving, I don't want to be there without you." He said, "Don't start that again." I said, "Now, wait a minute. Here you are in a hospital with a heart attack and you're telling me you don't want to talk about that." I'll never forget. He swung to the side of that bed, put both feet on the floor, looked me in the face, and said, "All right, tell me about it." I told him about Jesus, and he prayed, gave his heart to Christ. I tell you, when I walked out of that hospital, I had a bunch of keys like this. It was nighttime. I took my keys and I threw them as far as I could up in the air. I thought I'd never find them again. I was just so happy I didn't know what to do. Almost lost my keys. Threw them sky-high—that he'd come to Jesus and had been saved.

Jesus was motivated by joy—"for the joy that was set before him..." And we sing, "If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart." And, that's true. But if you want even more joy, more wonderful joy, remember that song we used to sing, "Going forth with weeping, sowing for the Master; tho' the lost sustained, our spirit often grieves; When our weeping's over, He will bid us welcome. We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves."

Now, Jesus said to me, to you, to all, to each, then and now, "...as my Father hath sent me, even so, send I you."

Conclusion

Now, tonight, before I close this message, I want you to imagine Jesus doing to you just what I did to Paul Williams. I want you to imagine the Son of God right now, every one of you who name the name of Jesus, both hands on your shoulders, looking you right in the eye, and saying to you, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Okay?

Now, folks, don't be disobedient to the heavenly command. Make a full, total surrender to Jesus Christ. Learn how to share the gospel. Pray that God will lay some soul upon your heart, or that God will open extraordinary opportunities to you. And then, be bold enough to speak for Jesus. Don't be afraid of failure. There can be no failure, if you obey. Whether they are saved or not, you will be a success, if you share the Lord

Jesus. Successful witnessing is sharing Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results with God. Successful witnessing is sharing Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results with God.

Now, look up here. Jesus is speaking now, not Adrian. Jesus is speaking. He's speaking to you. Here's what He's saying to you. Are you listening? Jesus now is speaking to you right now. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Would you bow your heads in prayer? In the quietness of this moment, if you've not been a witness, if Jesus' mandate, Jesus' motive, Jesus' method, Jesus' message, if that's not been yours, would you right now ask Him to have mercy on you and forgive you for being disobedient? He will forgive you. Then, right now, would you say, "Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. Right now, fill me with the Holy Spirit. O Spirit of the living God, I yield myself totally to You." And then, would you pray, "Lord, show me, teach me, help me to learn to witness." Maybe He'll tell you you need to get into E. E. Maybe He'll tell you that you just need to get some book out of the bookstore. Maybe get a tape, or maybe just get a Bible down and begin to study. There are plenty of ways around here you can learn to witness. Would you say, "Lord, help me to learn how to witness." And then, would you say, "Lord, use me—use me." Must I go, and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so? Without one soul with which to greet Him—must I empty-handed go? Oh, don't let it be said that you'll go to heaven alone. Father, seal the message to our hearts. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.



The Nail-Scarred Hand

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 1, 1986

Main Scripture Text: John 20:24–28

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God.”

JOHN 20:27–28

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Suffered
- II. Jesus Knows, Jesus Cares, and Jesus Understands
 - A. Pain Has a Protecting Purpose
 - B. Pain Has a Unifying Purpose
 - C. Pain Has a Correcting Purpose
- III. Jesus Has Conquered

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, this morning, and open to John—the twentieth chapter. In a moment we will commence reading in verse 2—John chapter 20. It’s good to hear the pages flutter. Get the Bible there—open in your lap. If you didn’t bring a copy of the Scripture with you, then most likely there’s one in the pew right before you. Find John chapter 20. Now, I want to ask you a question: What is the only man thing in Heaven? What is the only manmade thing in Heaven? I believe the only manmade things in Heaven are the scars in the hands of Jesus, the wounds in his feet—those scars yet visible above in beauty glorified.

Now, I want to talk to you today about the scars of Jesus. When you go somewhere on a vacation, so many times you bring back a souvenir. Jesus visited this planet, and he brought back as a souvenir—not something cheap and not something temporary—but something, if I understand the Bible, that will endure for all eternity and was bought at a fearful price. As a matter of fact, the prophet Zachariah pictures the Lord Jesus as He’s coming again, and people behold him, and they say, “What are those wounds in your hand?” And, he said, “Those are the wounds that I received when I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

He still bears those emblems of his suffering, and over yonder, in the book of Revelation, the Apostle John saw the Lamb upon the throne, but he saw the Lamb as though he had been slain. I take it the wounds are still there—a lamb as though he had been slain. “The Nail-Scarred Hand” is the title of my message. Back in the early twenties, one of the Southern Baptist great songwriters, B. B. McKinney, was in a revival meeting in Allen, Texas, and the evangelist gave the invitation, and he said to the people, “Want you give your heart to Jesus? Will you not place your hand in the nail-scarred hand?” That phrase stuck in the mind of B.B. McKinney, Brother Jim, and that night in the middle of a thunderstorm, he wrote the song that we sing: “Place Your Hand in the Nail-Scarred Hand.”

I want us to think, today, about the nail-scarred hand. I want us to think, today, of the nail-scarred hand, and I begin to read in verse 24: *“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God”* (John 20:24–28).

One of the great attestations to the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is this: Had Jesus not been Lord and God, He should have rebuked Thomas for unmitigated idolatry, but He is Thomas’ Lord; He is Thomas’ God; and He is my Lord and my God. One of the things that helps confirm that to our hearts are those wounds in the hands of Jesus, those nail-scarred hands. There are three things the nail-scarred hands speak to me about.

I. Jesus Suffered

First of all, they tell me, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that Jesus suffered. Jesus suffered. Now, suffering and pain are problems, and very frankly folks, they’re problems that are hard for Christians to answer. So many times, Christians have pain that seems almost unbearable, or they see a loved one—a child—suffer, and they say, “God, please do something about it. Oh God, remove the pain,” and He doesn’t do it. And, as a matter of fact, it seems to go the other way, and doubt comes. We begin to ask ourselves, “Why doesn’t God do something?” And, our minds begin to think, *Maybe God doesn’t have the power to do anything about it.* And, we say, “Oh no, if He’s God, then He’s got to be all-powerful.” Then our mind says, “Well, maybe He has the power, but

He just doesn't care—He doesn't love us enough." Then, we say, "Well, what kind of a God would that be—a God who doesn't love us?" And then, we say, "Well, maybe he doesn't love, and He doesn't have the power. Or maybe there's no God at all," and doubt begins to grow in our hearts and in our minds, as we try to explain the problem.

The problem of pain in a human being is a problem to you. Let me give you another problem: not why do humans suffer, but why did God suffer, and why does God suffer? Those wounds, yet visible above in beauty glorified—those prints in his hands—tell us that God suffered, and God continues to suffer. Isaiah 42, verse 14—God speaks of Himself, and He says: *"now will I cry like a travailing woman"* (Isaiah 42:14). Now, we know that God sings, but have you ever thought of God crying? *"I cry like a travailing woman"*—like a woman giving birth to a baby—a woman with labor pains. God says, in Isaiah, chapter 63, and verse 9, (speaking of His people): *"In all their affliction he was afflicted"* (Isaiah 63:9). When God's people were afflicted, God Himself was afflicted. God speaks, in Jeremiah, chapter 31, and verse 20, of that tribe of Ephraim; He says: *"Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him"* (Jeremiah 31:20). What does that mean? That's Old English. It speaks at the pit of the stomach. Any one of you who has a child that has done wrong and gone wrong—and everybody who has raised a child of maturity has, at one time or another, has been sick in the pit of his stomach—he's hurt, he's hurt. And, God says, "I hurt."

Now, when we have pain, we normally don't choose it. And sometimes, we can do absolutely nothing about it. But, God chose pain, and if God wanted to, then He could do something about His pain, because He is God, and He can do anything He well pleases. And yet, God has chosen to suffer. It's obvious, if you think about it, that God would suffer, because of the very thing that God has made of Himself—or God agrees to be—within His own eternal wisdom. God is a father. You can't be a father or a mother without suffering. The story of the prodigal son tells us that. The Bible tells us that we can grieve the Holy Spirit of God. *Grieve* is a love word. Parents grieve over their children, and the Holy Spirit grieves over us. Your automobile can vex you, but your children grieve you, because *grieve* is a love word. And so, we know of God as a father; He suffers because of His children when they do wrong. We know that Jesus is the head, and we are members of His Body. Can the members of the Body suffer and the head not know it? **As a matter of fact, when any member of your body suffers, it sends a message to the head immediately. That pain is picked up in the brain, and were the old brain to register the pain, your body would feel no pain.** Jesus is the head. When His church suffers, He suffers.

When the Apostle Paul was on the road to Damascus, his name was then Saul. He was persecuting the Church, and Jesus Christ met him and said to him: *"Saul, Saul,*

why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4; Acts 22:7). The point is obvious: Saul was persecuting the Church, but Jesus said, “You’re persecuting me.”

I want to ask you another question: Can a bridegroom have a bride that is unfaithful to him, flirtatious and indifferent, and not suffer? Jesus is the bridegroom, and the Church is the bride. Is it not obvious that if we’re unfaithful and untrue to Him, indifferent to Him, flirtatious with this world, that His heart is broken? I think I can say, dear friend, that those wounds in the hands of Jesus tell us one thing—that God...God has suffered, and God does suffer.

II. Jesus Knows, Jesus Cares, and Jesus Understands

Second thing, second thing: Not only do those wounds tell us that God has suffered and that God does suffer, but those wounds also tell us that because He has suffered, He knows, He cares, and He understands. When you hurt, dear friend, He hurts. The Bible tells us we don’t have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was, in all points, tempted as we are. Jesus, in a human body, suffered, and He knows exactly what you feel. Those souvenirs that He’s taken back to glory tell us, “I have been there.” Jesus walked the dusty roads of Galilee. Jesus wept at the graveside of Lazarus. The Bible says that when He saw the crowds He was moved with compassion. The word *compassion* is a composite word of two Latin words: *com*, meaning “with,” and *patti*, meaning “to suffer; to feel.” He knows, and He understands. Those scars tell us that when we suffer and when we hurt, He hears, and He understands our pain. Those scars are a lasting image of His humanity, and they tell us that the pain of man has become the pain of God. They speak to us of the greatness of His love. Whether you understand all about pain or not, those scars tell us, dear friend, that in your affliction, He loves you.

The Chinese, when they paint the word for love, they have a very high form of love that they paint this way: They paint an emblem for love and superimpose on it an emblem for pain. I guess the best way that you could translate that would be *pain-love*. That’s the highest kind of love that they know—*pain-love*. You see, God’s love allows humanity to suffer, and then God’s love suffers with humanity.

Now, why does God allow humanity to suffer? Why does God allow anybody to have wounds that turn to scars? Well, if you go way back to the book of Genesis, right in the beginning in the dawn of civilization after Adam and Eve had fallen into sin, God came to the Garden, and God forgave the sin, and God made it right. But then, God said to Adam and Eve, (concerning the ground): “*cursed is the ground for thy sake... Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*” (Genesis 3:17–18). Now, notice: God did not say that the ground was cursed for their judgment. God said that the ground was cursed for their sake, because He loved them.

Ladies and gentleman, the cruelest thing that God could do for falling humanity would be to allow them to continue to live in a painless world. They'd never know anything was wrong. You see, you need to be grateful for the pain. Pain is a gift to tell you that something is wrong. Let me give you a quote: "If I have the right and the power to eliminate pain, I would not use that right nor exercise that power." Who said that? Well, God didn't say that, but He could have said that, and He would have said that, and I'll tell you why: because God does have the power, and God does have the right, and God has not done it, and God is infinite love. God has the power to remove pain, and God has the right to do it, but He's not done it. Why? I'll tell you that Dr. Paul Brand, an eminent hand surgeon and man who worked for over twenty years with lepers in a leperorium, said, "I would not eliminate pain, because," he said, "pain is too valuable." This is what he said about pain: He said, "Pain's value is too great. Rather than eliminating pain, I would lend all my energies to doing all I can to help when that pain turns to suffering"—when that pain turns to suffering. Really, this pain is proof of God's love.

A. **Pain Has a Protecting Purpose**

You see, pain has a protecting purpose, first of all. Dr. Brand told us that lepers lose the ability to feel, they lose the ability to sense things, and so, therefore, there are so many things that happen to damage them, because they do not have their protecting power and propensities of pain.

When we run or jog... I bought some jogging shoes yesterday, and I read a little article about getting a good fit. And, this thing said that first of all, when you start, you put, primarily, the weight on them, and after you run awhile, it sort of moves out to the lateral side of the foot. And then, he goes on to say that if you've been on a long hike, after awhile, when you start out heel to toe, then before long you're going to be walking flatfooted like this, why? Because your body is constantly adjusting. When this muscle gets tired or worn, it moves to this one and then that one. You don't have to think about it—that's automatic, because there are sensors in your feet that tell you that, but a leper never feels that, and he'll just wear his feet off—just wear them out. He can't feel that. He'll be smoking a cigarette, and it will burn right on down and burn him, and he will never feel it, because he does not have the gift of pain.

You turn your ankle—have you ever turned your ankle and gone down, just like that? I was with Joyce one time, we were walking down a mountainside, and all of the sudden, Joyce was flat on the ground. I mean, she was flat. I couldn't imagine what on earth had happened to her. But, she stepped on a little pebble, and she turned her ankle. Later on, I read about that, and I discovered what had happened. There is a defense mechanism in your body when your body senses that strain on the ankle;

immediately then—just like that, faster than any computer can work—a message is sent to the brain, and back again, and tells the thigh, and tells the calf, “Take the weight off,” and you go down. You look silly, but it’s better than what could happen, isn’t it? It’s better than putting a break or a severe strain there and stretching the ligament. No wonder the Psalmist said that we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*,” and God allows pain there for a protecting purpose (Psalm 139:14).

B. Pain Has a Unifying Purpose

Not only is there the protecting purpose of pain, friend, there’s the unifying purpose of pain. Pain has a way of unifying the Body. You see, if members of your body could not feel pain, then you would not know they were members of your body. I was reading where wolves, sometimes, in the frozen North, running across the tundra will get frostbite, and one will go numb. Do you know what they do? They turn it off; they don’t treat it as a part of their own body, because they feel pain. They think of it as something different than their own body. You see, Dr. Paul Brand went on to say, “I can tell the health of a body, in many ways, by its ability to sense pain.”

That’s what the Apostle Paul was talking about in the New Testament when he was talking about the Church, which is his body, and he said, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, and verse 26, whether one member suffered, all the members suffer with him—that is, in a human body, when one part of you hurts, all of you hurts. You just can’t say, when you hit your thumb, “My thumb hurts.” You say, “I hurt.” I mean, you hurt all over. You see, that’s one of the ways to know that the body is healthy. When one member suffers, every member suffers with him.

I’ve used this silly illustration before, but have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer? I think of all the pain known to man, and that’s right up in the top ten, don’t you think? To hit your thumb with a hammer. And, I don’t know you very well, but I think I know what happened when you hit your thumb with a hammer. I think the very first thing you did was grab it like that. I think the second thing you did was pop it in your mouth and suck on it, and I think the third thing you did was do a little dance like this, isn’t that right? Sure. Now, you know why you did that? No, you don’t know why, and I don’t know why either. I mean, what do your knees have to do with your thumb? I don’t know, but that dance sure makes it feel better. And, when you do that little dance, it’s just a way of saying that when one member suffers every member suffers with Him.

Pain has a unifying force, and by the way, if the ability to feel pain is a mark of health, then we ought to think about that as a Church—His Body. What about the elderly? What about the poor? What about those who are shut in? What about the battered child? What about that person with a broken home? Do we hurt when they hurt? What about that brother who has been broken and fallen in sin? When one

member suffers every member suffers with Him. I'm telling you, dear friend, there's a protecting purpose in pain. I'm telling you there's a unifying purpose in pain.

C. **Pain Has a Correcting Purpose**

There's another purpose in pain. Dear friend, there's a correcting purpose in pain. Pain corrects. You put your hand on a hot stove—there's a message that says, "It's hot down here." It goes to your head, and your head says, "Move your hand," and you move it like that. You don't have to think about it—it goes just like that, but that corrects it. You see, dear friend, why does God allow us to live in a world that is cursed with pain? Because what we call a curse is a blessing. The worst thing God could do—I say it again, the worst thing God could do—to sinful and fallen humanity would be for them to live in a world un-cursed by pain. Because, it is the pain that tells us something is wrong that needs to be corrected, and you can put it down big, and plain, and straight: Pain will never be removed until the last vestige of sin is eradicated, and then, pain will be removed, because pain is God's message to fallen, broken humanity that something is desperately wrong.

But, you say, "But why do the little children suffer?" That's just how wrong it is, dear friend. Sin is so indiscreet. Suffering is so indiscriminate. That's the unfair thing about sin, but God has warned us that something is tragically wrong with His universe. But, what does it say to us when we see those wounds in the hands of Jesus? Those nail-pierced hands? They tell us that He has suffered. But, not only do they tell us that He has suffered, friend, they also tell us that He has willingly, voluntarily identified Himself with our humanity, that He might take that load, that He might bear that load, and that He might share that load with us.

III. **Jesus Has Conquered**

The third thing those wounds tell us is this: Not only has He suffered, and therefore, not only does He understand how we feel, not only can He be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, but they also tell us that He has overcome—that He has conquered. I remind you that those were scars after the Resurrection; those were not raw and bleeding wounds—those were wounds that had been healed. The Bible says, in Isaiah, chapter 53, and verse 5, (speaking of Jesus): "*he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5). Dear friend, there's victory in those wounds. He's saying, "It is done. It is paid for, and this is but a souvenir—this is but an eternal reminder that your sin debt has been paid at Calvary." You see, such love. Again, I remind you, friend, that He didn't have to suffer this way, but He chose to.

I think you can understand. Those of you who have children: Let's suppose that you

have a child who is away in school, and that child, right now, is in deep trouble. Now, you're happy right now; you're looking forward to going to lunch with some friends. But now, let's suppose that your child is on drugs, living in filth, and you don't know it. Let's suppose that your child is lying, right now, in the emergency room of some hospital with his body broken and twisted. You're sitting here in church relaxing. Now, if you could choose, would you choose not to know and remain happy, or would you choose to know and begin to suffer? You'd say, "I want to know." You mean you would want—voluntarily want—to know; you would want to begin to suffer? Sure, you would. You would say, "If my child is hurting, then I want to know so I can hurt, too. If my child is in trouble, then I need to know. I want to come there. I want to invade that suffering. I want to do what I can do."

I'm so glad God describes Himself as a father, aren't you? And, I'm so glad that the Bible says that when my father and my mother cast me off, then is when the Lord takes me up. He has love, dear friend. There are some parents who say, "I don't care what he does. I'm finished with him." I can't imagine a parent like that. I don't want to make an idle boast, but I want to tell you, dear friend, that I don't believe there is anything any of my children could ever do, or ever be, that would cause me to forsake one of my children. I couldn't do it; it'd be impossible, so far as I know from the way that God has built me. But, dear friend, the love that I have for my children is but a miniscule example of the great love of God, who, when we are afflicted, took our affliction. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

One young man had wronged his father so many times, and the father had been so patient and so loving. Finally, a friend came to him and said, "If that were my son, I'll tell you what I would do," and proceeded to say what he would do. This father with a broken heart said, "I can understand that." And, he said, "If he were your son, that's what I would do." But, he said, "He's not your son; he's my son, and there's a difference."

Dear friend, I want to tell you that the stories of Jesus tell us that God so loved us that He was wounded for our transgressions, and He was bruised for our iniquity. That's what the cross is all about. People don't understand that. Phil Donahue doesn't understand it. Phil Donahue was discussing his disenchantment with Christianity. This is what he said (and I quote): "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sin? If God the father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" Friend, that is exactly what He did. He did come down and go to Calvary.

Second Corinthians, chapter 5, and verse 19: *"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:19). Do you know how God the Father suffered when God the Son suffered? When our first child was born, my pastor

said, “Congratulations Adrian,” then he said, “Adrian, you’re going to learn something.” He said, “You’re going to learn something of the love of God,” and he said something that I have found to be very true. He said, “Before you have children of your own, you think of the great love that Jesus had when He died for us. But, after you have children of your own, you think of the great love that the Father had when He sent His Son, when He sent His Son.” Oh, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto His own.

My dear friend, those wounds yet visible above in beauty glorified, those nail-pierced hands that He takes as an emblem of His humanity and a souvenir from His visit to planet earth—they tell us, number one, that God has suffered. They tell us, number two, that because God has suffered, He understands. And, we can cast all of our care upon Him, for He cares for us. And, they tell us, number three, that He has conquered; He has overcome. He is a Lamb sitting upon the throne, a Lamb as though He had been slain, and yet, He has overcome. This Resurrection appearance was on the other side of bloody Golgotha, when Jesus asked Thomas to thrust his finger into the print in His hand.

Conclusion

Let me just conclude this message by saying this to you, this morning: Dear friend, if you follow Jesus—are you listening?—if you follow Jesus, then you, too, are going to have some scars. That’s all right, that’s all right. Let me give you some Scriptures. Colossians, chapter 1, and verse 24: *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church”* (Colossians 1:24). Paul said, “I suffer.” Paul said, in Philippians, chapter 3, and verse 10: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings”* (Philippians 3:10). If you serve Jesus very much, then you’re going to have some scars. Paul had scars. Do you know what Paul said? Paul said, in the book of Galatians: *“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”* (Galatians 6:17). He literally meant the brand marks. Now, this was literal, because he’d been beaten, whipped, and stoned. He had scars all over his body, but Paul used an interesting word. He said I bear in my body the *stigmata* of Christ. Now, what he meant by that was the same word that we get our word—it’s the word we get our word *stigma* from. I bear the shame—these marks, the stigma of Christ. I want to bring a message on that pretty soon: “The Marks of Christ.”

Let me tell you what Paul did with those marks. He used them to preach with, and to authenticate the gospel. Are you listening to me? If you suffer and those wounds heal, that may be your greatest testimony for Jesus Christ. The things that convinced Thomas were the scars. And, your scars may be the message that will convince some unbeliever today that you cared enough, and yet you’ve overcome, and God will use it.

Listen, friend: Bring your wounds to Jesus. Use your scars for Jesus. Bring your wounds for Jesus. Use your scars for Jesus.

One last thing: Would you imagine Jesus, right now, upon His throne? Just close your eyes. Imagine Him on the throne, and see Him in beauty glorified. See those ruby red scars in His hand. Are you suffering today? In the pain, anguish, doubt, and confusion, He's reaching out that hand to you. He's saying, "My child, I know how you feel. Cast your care upon Me. I care for you. I'm touched with the feeling of your infirmity, and I want to tell you, if you're suffering here today, that you can place your hand, right now—do it right now—in the nail-scarred hand. Just do it."

There's somebody here today, who is lost—you're not certain that you're saved; you don't know that you're right with God; and you don't know that you're right with God. You need to be saved, and you want to be saved. Then, place your hand in that nail-scarred hand. Do it right now. Say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart and save me. Forgive my sin, and make me your child," and He will. And, don't you take some sedative to block out the pain. It's not a sedative you need; it's the Savior that you need.

Father, I pray that many today will come to Christ. Holy Spirit of God, bring conviction and help people to be saved. For this we pray in His dear name—the name of Jesus—amen.

The Stars and Scars of Christmas

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 14, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 20:24–29

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Scars Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Suffered
- II. The Scars Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Sympathizes
 - A. The Protecting Purpose of Pain
 - B. The Unifying Purpose of Pain
 - C. The Correcting Purpose of Pain
- III. The Scars Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Saves

Conclusion

Introduction

This is Theology 101. Are you ready for the test? One question on the test: Is Jesus God or man? All right. The answer to that question is *yes*. He is the God-man, God in human flesh. The prophet Isaiah said, *“Unto us a child is born,”* and *“unto us a son is given.”* When Isaiah said, *“a child is born,”* he was speaking of His humanity. When he said, *“a son is given,”* He was speaking of His deity. He is the God-man. Now as a child, He was born in Bethlehem. As God, He has ruled from eternity. He did not have His beginning only His birth at Bethlehem. And the star pointed the way to where the child was in the Christmas story, but there’s a darker side to Christmas: not only the stars, but the scars, because, as a man, He was born to die. As God, He died for our sins. Can you think of God with scars? You see the little baby there in the manger, and you see those little dimpled feet. Those little dimpled feet are going to be pierced with a hideous, cruel nail. You see those little chubby hands and those pink fingers: they will one day bear scars.

Now the time for our scripture is this. Jesus has lived a sinless life. He has been falsely accused. He is butchered on a cruel Roman cross. He is put into a grave, and that grave is sealed with a stone. Yet on the third day He rises. He comes out of that grave a living, victorious Savior. He has appeared to His disciples, and He has shown Himself alive. Thomas was not there when He first appeared. Eight days later, Jesus appears again. And here is the passage I’m reading—John chapter 20 and verse 24: *“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.”* By the way, when

you miss church, no telling what you're going to miss—no telling what you're going to miss. There Jesus showed up, and Thomas was absent. I want to have the kind of a church where you dare not miss a Sunday, because you'll be afraid of what you might miss if you don't show up. Jesus showed up, but Thomas wasn't there. And so the next time, Thomas is there. "But he said unto them, Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." That is, "I want to see if He was crucified and risen. I want to know it's Him. The way I will know is when I see these scars in His hand and in His side." "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him,"—I love this part—"My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

And there, ladies and gentlemen, He's talking about you and me. Blessed are they who've not seen what Thomas saw, but have believed. Now Thomas saw the scars, and he said, "My LORD and my God." Think of it: a God with scars.

Now I want you to consider with me the scars of the Lord Jesus. They're not incidental. They are so fundamental that Jesus carried those scars with Him to heaven. Did you know that the only manmade thing in heaven is the scars of Jesus Christ? Jesus visited earth, and when He went back to heaven He took some souvenirs of His visit with Him. Those souvenirs are the scars in His hands and the scar in His side. He has kept those scars as a lasting memorial of His humanity through all eternity. When Jesus comes again, one of the ways that we will know that it is the dear Savior—of the many ways—are the blessed scars. Put in your margin Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." When He comes again, He will bear those blessed scars. So I want us to think about "The Stars and Scars of Christmas." And there are three things, as we think about God in human flesh, that I want you to learn about the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Scars Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Suffered

Number one: The scars tell us that, as a man, Jesus suffered. Now it's very important that you understand this: that, as a man, Jesus suffered. In John chapter 20, verse 27, Jesus invited Thomas to examine those scars. They were a brute testimony to the fact that Jesus, indeed, was pierced with those hideous nails.

There's a great problem in the world today when you try to testify about God. The problem is not primarily science. The problem is primarily history. The problem is primarily suffering. And people will ask you again and again, "How can you believe in a God, if there be a God, who allows so much suffering?" And this causes great doubt, because here's the way the human mind works: "Well, if God is love, and God is all-powerful, why does God allow so much suffering?" And so they think, "Well, perhaps He is a God of infinite love, but He has no power; therefore He is a weak God. Or else He is all-powerful, but He has no love; and so He is a cruel God. Or perhaps He has no power and no love; so He is no God at all." That's the way people think.

But there's a greater question. Not why do men suffer—here's the great question: Why does God suffer? Now, you want a question? Friend, the question is not why do we as humans suffer, but those scars tell us that God, in human flesh, suffered. Isaiah 53, verse 3, speaking of Jesus: "*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*" Now I remind you, He was God in human flesh, and He suffered. Again, the Bible says, in Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 9, "In all their affliction"—talking about us—"he was afflicted."

And not only did He suffer when He was here, but I have some information for you: God still suffers. God in His glory suffers. You say, "How could God suffer?" Well, let me give you a verse—Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30. The Bible says, "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" Have you ever been grieved? Grief is a form of emotional suffering. And God in heaven still suffers. God grieves.

Now you can understand this. Does a father suffer when he has a wayward son? That's what the story of the prodigal son is all about: that God the Father suffers because He has children away from Him. *Grieve* is a love word. You can only grieve somebody who you love. Your lawnmower may vex you; your children will grieve you—amen?—because you love them. And, by the way, that verse, Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30, is a great verse to teach the personality of the Holy Spirit. The Jehovah's Witnesses tell us that the Holy Spirit is not a person; He is just an influence from God. Well, you can't grieve an influence. Only a person can be grieved. And the only person who can be grieved is someone who loves you. *Grieve* is a love word. God still suffers.

I want to ask you a question: Does the head suffer when the body feels pain? Of course it does! Christ is the head of the Church. We are His body. When you suffer, our Lord suffers. He's touched with the feeling of your infirmity. When Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus appeared to Saul and said, "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*" He could have said, "Well, I'm not persecuting you. I'm persecuting these Christians." But, friend, when a Christian is persecuted, Jesus is persecuted. When the body hurts,

the head hurts. We're the bride. Jesus is the groom. If the bride is unfaithful to the groom, would not the groom grieve? When the church is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, is not His heart broken? Jesus suffers. As a man, He suffered. The scars tell us. The scars tell us that God has suffered.

Now, here's a big question: Why? Why would God Almighty, who could do anything, whatever He wants, whenever He wants, why would He choose to suffer?

II. The Scars Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Sympathizes

Second point: not only do the scars of Jesus tell us that, as a man, He suffered, but the scars of Jesus tell us that, as a man, Jesus sympathizes. Those scars that we read about in John chapter 20 and verse 27 tell us the Jesus understands.

When I go into a home, and there's been a death, a tragedy, the loss of a child, or whatever, I try never to say, "I understand," because it's an insult to the person who's suffering. They say, "No, you don't understand." And they're right. Nobody really knows the hurt. Nobody really knows the pain in the human heart except Jesus. But Jesus really does suffer.

When we go off on a trip somewhere Joyce will pick up some trinkets somewhere. Trinkets is mostly what they are. They're souvenirs. Why do we buy souvenirs when we go somewhere? Well, they're sort of a reminder I have been there. Jesus, when He went to heaven, brought with Him to heaven some souvenirs from earth, and those souvenirs are the scars that remain in His hands. And what do those souvenirs of earth tell us? That He has been there, He has felt, and He understands our pain.

Put down now Hebrews chapter 2, verses 17 and 18: "*Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren,*"—to him is Jesus; the brethren, that's us. He's made like us—"that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered..."—underscore that—"he himself hath suffered being tempted,"—that means, "being tested"—"he is able to succor,"—that is an old-fashioned word which means, "to help"—"them that are tempted." Jesus said, "When you suffer, I suffer. And not only do I suffer, but because I suffer, I understand." Hebrews chapter 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 tested like as we are, yet without sin.*" He's touched. He knows. He cares. He feels. He understands. And He loves.

Dr. Paul Brand was a missionary, a great surgeon, who spent a lot of time ministering to lepers in leper colonies. And Dr. Brand talked about the horrible sins of leprosy, and he said, "One of the debilitating sins of leprosy is that it removes the ability of the human body to feel pain." And then here's what Dr. Paul Brand said, and I copied

it down for you. Listen to what this great doctor said. He said, “If I had the power to eliminate pain, I would not exercise that right. Pain’s value is too great.” Notice—pain’s value. “Rather, I would lend all of my energies in doing all that I can to help when the pain turns to suffering.”

I want to tell you something. Our Lord suffered, and our Lord sympathizes, and the pain that He allows us to have is really proof of His love. The pain that He allows us to have is proof of His love. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God said, “Cursed is the ground”—now, listen to this—“for your sake.” He didn’t say, “for your punishment,” but “for your welfare.” “For your sake, thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you.” God put a curse on the environment in which we live, because the worst thing that could happen to us would be for us to have the sickness, the infection, of sin, and to feel no pain.

A. The Protecting Purpose of Pain

There is the protecting purpose of pain. When you and I walk, we stand on one foot, then on another. When we sit, we shift our weight around. But a leper doesn’t do that. Dr. Brand says that a leper that doesn’t limp when his leg is hurt, because he feels no pain, so he walks on the wound. The injured legs never get any rest. When you turn your ankle, if your body is healthy, the nerves immediately order your body to take the weight off of that ankle. It will happen just like that.

I was walking down a mountainside with my bride, Joyce. It was a beautiful day, a beautiful mountain. And suddenly Joyce was on the ground just like that. What had happened? Joyce had turned her ankle. And when she turned her ankle, the nerves in her body caused this muscle to relax, and she went down just like that. Now the reason for that was to protect her leg, that she would not walk on that twisted and stretched tendon. And, thankfully, before long, she was feeling good again and could walk. Pain has a protecting purpose. Thank God for pain. It tells us something is wrong.

B. The Unifying Purpose of Pain

Pain has a unifying purpose. It is pain that draws us together. Your whole body comes to the aid of a suffering member. I’ve often used this illustration. Do you ever hit your thumb with a hammer when putting up a picture for your wife on the wall? I’m talking about one of those that turns your thumb black. I know what you did. You grabbed it with *this* hand. The second thing you did, you stuck it in your mouth and sucked on it. The third thing you did is a little dance. Now, why did you do that? What do your knees have to do with your thumb? I don’t know, but you’ve got to do that dance. Friend, pain has a unifying factor.

Do you know what unifies a church? Suffering. Do you know what brings people

together? Suffering. The Bible says, “When one member suffers, all members suffer with it.” Dr. Brand said, “I can tell the health of a human body by its reaction to pain. If it doesn’t react to pain, there is something wrong.” You can tell the health of a church by its reaction to pain. How much does a church care for the homeless, the sick, those with broken hearts and broken hopes and broken homes? A church is unified by pain.

C. The Correcting Purpose of Pain

Pain has a protecting purpose. Pain has a unifying purpose. And pain has a correcting purpose. Dr. Brand said that the lepers who would smoke cigarettes sometimes would smoke the cigarette right on down until the fire in the cigarette would burn their fingers, and they’d continue to smoke and burn their flesh, because they could feel no pain. God allows pain to protect us. And if it weren’t for the pain, we would never know that we’re being hurt. You put your hand on a hot stove, and there’s a message that goes immediately to your brain and says, “It’s hot down here.” And the brain says, “Well, move,” and it moves just like that. Now you don’t realize that you’re doing all that thinking, but you’re doing that because that pain says that you need to protect yourself.

Pain comes in all kinds of forms. There’s physical pain. There is emotional pain. There is spiritual pain. And Americans want to kill pain at any cost. That’s the reason we have so many sedatives. That’s the reason kids get on drugs: to kill the pain. That’s the reason some adults are on drugs: to kill the pain. Now there is a legitimate use of medicine. But many are trying to dull their sensibilities. They don’t get along with their parents, and they turn to drugs. And I want to tell you, when kids get on drugs, they really don’t care what their parents think. They are in another world. Some turn to alcohol. And it’s kind of pathetic to see adults addicted to alcohol criticizing young people addicted to drugs.

Why do people turn to alcohol? So many times, to kill the pain. A man’s drunk; he says, “I’m feeling no pain.” He says, “I’m going to drown my troubles.” Well, his troubles can swim. The Japanese have a proverb: “First a man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man.” Why do we do this? Why do people have an affair? Why do they commit adultery? Many times, trying to kill the pain of insecurity and loneliness. One of the biggest sedatives that we have today is television. People watch television because they can’t face themselves, and they live in a make-believe world. The problem is that many people take a sedative when they need a Savior. The pain is to tell us that something is wrong.

Now Jesus gives us peace and joy, not primarily to remove the pain—that will be done at the rapture—but to help us to endure the pain. Now when we see scars in the

hands of Bethlehem's Babe, they are a testimony to His humanity: a God with scars. They tell us, as God, He suffers; as man, He suffers. As God, He sympathizes; as man, He sympathizes. He knows how we feel. He understands. And Jesus will hear the cries of a blind beggar before He hears the cries of a proud Pharisee.

III. The Scars Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Saves

Now, here's the third thing: not only do the scars of Jesus tell us that, as a man, Jesus suffers; and not only do they tell us that, as a man, Jesus sympathizes; but the scars of Jesus tell us, as a man, Jesus saves. It is so important that you understand this. Why was He nailed to that hellish cross? Why did He step out of glory? Why did He allow Himself to be pierced? Why were those nails put into His quivering hands and into those precious feet? Why? Well, the Bible says, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]."*

Now I want to remind you of something, friend. Jesus did not have to suffer. He could have refused the cross. Jesus said, *"No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself."* Jesus was the only man who ever chose to die. You say, "What about a suicide?" He doesn't choose to die. He only chooses the time of his death. He's going to die anyway. There's a new statistic out on death: one out of one people die. Jesus was the only One who had no sin in Himself. He could have refused death. He said, *"No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself."* It was not those nails that held Him to the cross. It was love. He did not have to suffer. But He did suffer.

May I ask you a question? Those of you who have children, and those children suffer, those children are in trouble, those children are in pain, would you rather not know about it, or would you rather know about it, so you can move in and do something about it? Suppose you and your wife are celebrating an anniversary. Suppose you've taken your money and saved it, and you're taking that once-in-a-lifetime vacation, and you're in a hotel in Hawaii, and you have a child here left at home, and that child is in an automobile accident. Question: Would you want your vacation interrupted to know your child was in an automobile accident? I mean, after all, if nobody told you, you didn't know, wouldn't you just rather be over there in paradise, not knowing that your child was suffering? Because when you know your child is suffering, then what does that do to the vacation? Immediately you pack. You leave everything, and you go back home. Which of you would say, "Well, I had rather not know; I'd just rather live in my oblivious happiness"? Of course not! Of course not! There's not a parent, there's not a mother or father, in this room who would say, "If my child is suffering, I don't want to know about it."

You see, theoretically, you could say, "I'm going to Hawaii. Nobody call me about

anything. I don't want to know about anything. We're just interested in our joy, our felicity, our good time." No! If you love somebody, when they hurt, you hurt. And when you can do something about it, if you can, you want to. And if you can't do anything about it, you still want to be there to hurt with them and suffer with them. The question, I say, is not, "Why does man suffer?" but "Why did God suffer?" I'll tell you why God suffered: *"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."* Isaiah 53, verse 5: *"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* He loves us.

There was a wayward boy who had so disgraced his parents, and they'd given him chance after chance after chance, and he had failed and embarrassed them and hurt them and wounded them and refused them and rebelled against them. The man whose son this was, was talking to another man. And the other man gave this suffering father this advice. He said, "I'll tell you what I would do. If that were my son, here's what I would do." And this man giving advice to the brokenhearted father was telling him how he should just cast this son off and be done with him and seal him off. And he said, "If that were my son, that's what I would do." And this father said, "Yes, and if he were your son, that's what I would do. But he's not your son. He's my son, and I can't do that. He is my son."

And, friend, God loves us. There's no one here that God does not love, and there's no one that God does not want to save. And, you see, He's God in human flesh. And the question is, "Why does God suffer?" We might say that He suffers that He might be a sympathizing Savior, but He also suffers that He might be a Savior who saves.

Phil Donahue, discussing Christianity, said this—he could not understand the cross; and here's what he said—and I quote: "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" And the answer is, of course, He did. That's exactly what He did. This was God in human flesh.

Put this scripture down—2 Corinthians 5:19: *"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."* God was in Christ. Why did God become a man? Our dominion was lost by a man. It must be legally regained by a man. First Corinthians 15, verse 21: *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* You say, "Well, I didn't vote for Adam. I don't think I ought to be held responsible for his sin." You ought to be so grateful, dear friend, that God, who not only counts the human race guilty in Adam, also counts the human race, by faith, justified in Christ. I'm so grateful that I have

in Jesus a redemption, that Jesus did for me what I could never do for myself. And I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. “In Adam all die, but in Christ shall all be made alive.” Listen to this—Hebrews 2, verse 9: *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* The scars tell me that Jesus saves—that Jesus saves.

When my first son was born, Steve, my pastor said to me, “Adrian, you will understand something different now about the love of God. Before you have a child of your own, you think of the great love the Savior had when He died for us; but when you have a child of your own, you think of the love of the Father who gave His Son.” And that is so true—that is so true. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* God was in Christ. He was God, but He was man. As God, He was sinless. But as a man, He suffered, because there needed to be a sinless substitute. *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

Think not only of the stars, but the scars, of Christmas. Listen. Jesus came to earth that we might go to heaven. Jesus was born of a virgin that we might be born again. Jesus became the Son of man that we might become the sons and the daughters of God. Jesus died that we might live. The scars tell us that, as a man, Jesus suffered. The scars tell us that, as a man, Jesus sympathizes. The scars tell us that, as a man, Jesus saves. And, hallelujah! He does!

Conclusion

Now, let me come to the conclusion of this message, and I want to lay several things upon your heart. Listen carefully now. Jesus had some scars, and if you follow Jesus, so will you. God had only one Son without sin, but He didn’t have any Son without suffering. Philippians 3, verse 10: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.”*

If you think you’re going to get out of this world unscarred, you’re not going to do it. There’s no fine print in the contract. And there is the suffering that comes with serving the Lord Jesus Christ. In Galatians chapter 6, verse 17, the Apostle Paul says, *“I bear in my body the [scars] of the Lord Jesus.”* Now Paul could say that literally, because the lash had been laid upon his back, but he’s using the word here *stigmata*: “I bear the nail prints in my body of the Lord Jesus Christ.” May I tell you, friend—listen carefully now, those of you who are going to a sedative rather than the Savior—your scars may be your greatest ministry.

What was it that caused Thomas to believe? Thomas said, “Except I see the scars, I’ll not believe.” And Jesus said, “All right, Thomas, put your finger here. Put your finger

here. Put your hand there.” Do you know what a scar is? A scar is a wound that has healed. And when Thomas saw the scars—Thomas saw Him crucified, but now Thomas sees He is raised, He is victorious, He has overcome—Thomas believes. Did you know that there are people who are going to believe in Jesus when they see your scars? Did you know that? When you can testify that, “Jesus has healed me. Here are my wounds, red and raw and bloody, but Jesus has healed me.” I’ve seen it happen so many times.

As you know, Joyce and I have a little boy in heaven. When our son died, to us it was like a crucifixion, and deep and red was the wound, but we carried it to Jesus, and Jesus healed it. The first scripture that I saw after our son died, I never even noticed it in the Bible before: *“Blessed be God...the Father of all mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort [others with the same] comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* I’ve seen Joyce put her arms around mothers who’ve lost little ones and give comfort. You know how she could do it? With her scars—with her scars—with her wound that has been healed.

Are you hurting today? Is there a pain? Is there a problem? Is there a heartache? Listen to me. Bring your wounds to Jesus. He understands. He cares. He has been there. Bring your wounds to Jesus, and use your scars for Jesus. Use your scars for Jesus. That may be your greatest testimony: not that you’ve sailed through life without feeling any pain, not that God has protected you as His little darling, but that God has been with you, and *“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.”*

I want you now in your mind to imagine our risen Savior. I want you to see Him on the throne of His glory. And I want you to see in His hands the print of the nails, because He bears them for all eternity. And I want you to see those nail-scarred hands reaching to you right now. And if you’ve never done it, would you not like to put your hand in that hand and say, “Save me, Lord Jesus. Thank you that you are the God-man. Thank you that, as a man, you suffered; as a man, you sympathized; and, as a man, you save. Save me, Jesus.” Pray it and mean it.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. I want to guide you in a prayer, and in this prayer you can ask Christ to save you. And I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that He will save you and He will keep you. Pray this prayer: “Dear Jesus, Thank you that, as a man, you died on the cross for me, though God of very God. You did not have to suffer, and yet you did. You chose to suffer, because you love me. Thank you, Jesus. Now, Lord Jesus, I open my heart, and I receive you by faith as my Lord and Savior. Save me, Jesus.” Pray it and mean it. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way: “Thank you for doing it. And, Lord, if you’ll just give me the strength, I’ll make it public. I’ll not be ashamed of you, because you died for me.

In your holy name. Amen.”

The Stars and Scars of Christmas

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 14, 2003

Main Scripture Text: John 20:24–29

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”

JOHN 20:27

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Scars of Jesus Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Suffered
- II. The Scars of Jesus Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Sympathizes
- III. The Scars of Jesus Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Saves

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find John the 20th chapter, please. And when you’ve found it, look up here. I’m going to give you a test in theology. Are you reading for the test? All right, here is the question. One question on the test: Is Jesus Christ God or is He man? Yes. The answer is yes. He is the God-man. As much God as if He were not man at all, as much man as if He were not God at all. We are bringing the third message in a series, “God in Human Flesh.” And the title of the message today is, “Stars and Scars of Christmas”—“The Stars and the Scars of Christmas.”

Now, when we think of Christmas, we think of the stars, and that star that led the wise men there on their journey to find the Christ child. But I doubt very much that we think of scars. But that little baby that lay there in the manger would one day have His body scarred. And those little dimpled feet that lay in the straw would one day be pierced with a nail. And those chubby little hands with the pink fingers would have a searing nail placed through them, and those hands would be scarred. The Bible makes much of the scars of Jesus. It’s not a small thing. It is a major thing.

Look here in John chapter 20 and let me give you the setting for John chapter 20. The Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, but He went through a mock trial. He was beaten, bruised, battered, nailed on a hellish Roman cross with searing nails put through His quivering palms, through His feet, a sword thrust into His side. He was taken down a lifeless form from the cross. He was put in a borrowed tomb, and stayed there three days and three nights. After three days and

three nights, He walked out of that grave a risen, victorious Savior, and He appeared to His disciples, and they saw the resurrected Lord. But Thomas was not there. Eight days later, Thomas is present, and he sees the Lord Jesus. That's the background. Now, I want you to look, if you will, in the Scripture, beginning in verse 24: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now, Thomas had missed the church service. He missed the worship service. I don't know why he stayed away. Perhaps he was discouraged. Perhaps he was frightened. But he stayed away, and he missed something when he stayed away. Jesus showed up, and Thomas wasn't there. You know, you should never miss a church service. You might miss something wonderful. Jesus will show up, and you won't be there. And Thomas missed it all. So eight days later, Thomas was there. And, by the way, one of the reasons I believe that Thomas was there is because the others said, "We've seen Jesus." When you leave this service, you ought to go everywhere telling people what has happened, and say, "You should have been there. Jesus showed up and you weren't there." And so Thomas is there the next time. Look in verse 26: "And after eight days again, his disciples were within and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord and my God." Now, think of it. Jesus said, "Look at these scars," and Thomas says, "My Lord and my God..."—a God with scars in His hands; never forget this, God with scars—"My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The story of Christmas goes beyond the stars. It goes to the scars. The scars of Jesus are so important that He carried them with Him to heaven. The only man-made thing in heaven are the scars of Jesus Christ, made by human hands and carried to heaven as a lasting memorial of His humanity. A God—the God—with scars in His hands.

When we take a trip somewhere, we often bring back souvenirs. And Joyce will go to the shop and she'll find some little trinket, some souvenir. Why do we buy souvenirs when we go somewhere? To say, "I've been there." Jesus, when He went back to heaven, Jesus, who visited Planet Earth, came back to heaven, and He took with Him back to heaven these scars as souvenirs. But they were not cheap, tawdry; they were meaningful. When Jesus comes again, one of the ways that we will recognize Him is those very scars. Put this scripture down, if you will—Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 6: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall

answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” Think of it. For all eternity, for 2,000 years, our Lord has been there in the glory with the scars in His hands, the wound in His side, the nail print in His feet. And when He comes again, and we see Him, we will see those ruby red scars.

Now, what is the meaning? What is the message? Why the emphasis on the scars of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—a God with scars, God in human flesh? Three things the scars tell us today, and I pray God will write them upon your heart.

I. The Scars of Jesus Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Suffered

First of all, the scars tell us that, as a man, Jesus suffered. As a man, Jesus suffered. He hurt. He was crucified. He was butchered on that cross. Look again, if you will, in verse 27. Jesus said, “Look at these scars. Put your hand there in My side and see the wound.”

You see, folks, there’s a great problem in the world today in the minds of men, and it keeps some people from believing in Christ, and it causes great doubt in the hearts and minds of those who want to believe, and it’s the problem of suffering. Some people think that the problem in the world is the problem of science. They say, “How can you believe in a God scientifically? How can you believe in the resurrection, and so forth, scientifically? How can you believe in the virgin birth scientifically?” That may be a problem to some, but there’s a greater problem to most, and it is not the problem of science; it is the problem of suffering. They ask this question: “If there is a God, and that God is a loving God, and that God is an all-powerful God, why the heartache? Why the tears? Why the pain? Why the sickness? Why the suffering? Why the accident? Why the cancer? Why the palsy? Why, why, why, why are they suffering?” because they say, “If He is a God of love, and doesn’t do something about it, it may mean that He doesn’t have the power to do it and, therefore, He’s a weak God.” Or, they say, “If He’s all-powerful and can do something about it, and He doesn’t, maybe He’s a cruel God—He doesn’t care.” And then they say, “Well, probably there’s no God at all because of human suffering. If He were God, He would do something about it.” And that is a big problem to many people—why do we suffer? But there’s a bigger problem: not why does man suffer, but why did God suffer? Those wounds tell us that He suffered. This was not a charade. This is not make-believe. It’s not a parody. He suffered. The Bible talks of a suffering Savior. Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 3: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Jesus suffered. Don’t think of Jesus as some sort of an IBM machine with milk for blood. He suffered more than any man has ever suffered. Jesus suffered. He was afflicted. Isaiah 63, verse 9: “In all their affliction, he was afflicted.”

And not only did He suffer; He still suffers. Do you think of God right now in heaven

as suffering? He does. Think, for example, of Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30. The Bible says, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Grief is a form of suffering, perhaps the worst form of suffering. Animals feel pain, but animals never grieve. Only man can grieve, because grief is a love word. You grieve over people that you love. Your neighbor’s children may vex you, your lawn mower may vex you, but your own children will grieve you if they do wrong, is that not true? You see, grieve is a love word. By the way, Ephesians 4:30 is a great text to prove the personality of the Holy Spirit because there are false cults who don’t believe that the Holy Spirit is God. They don’t believe in a triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, will tell you that the Holy Spirit is only a force, an emanation, coming from God. But you can’t grieve a force. You grieve a person. The Holy Spirit is a person who hurts and He’s grieved. Well, how could God be grieved? Well, you think about it. If you’re a father and you have a wayward, rebellious son, are you not grieved? That’s what the story of the prodigal son is all about in Luke chapter 15.

You think about it. The church is a body; Christ is the head. If the body hurts, does not the head know it? Does not the head sense the pain when the body hurts? You put your hand on a hot stove, a message goes to the brain and says, “It’s hot down here.” And the brain goes back to the hand and says, “Well, move.” But the hand and the head are connected. Friend, when the body hurts, the head hurts. When Saul, before he became the apostle Paul, was persecuting the church, putting Christians in jail and causing them to be killed, Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, and Jesus said to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And Saul might have said, “Whoever you are, I’m not persecuting you; I’m persecuting the church.” But the truth is patently clear. When the church is persecuted, Christ is persecuted. When the church hurts, Christ hurts. When you hurt, He hurts. He suffers. Let me ask you a question. If a man is betrothed to a woman, engaged to her to marry her, and finds out that she’s been unfaithful to him and been flirtatious, or worse, immoral with another man, would not the bridegroom grieve? Does not our heavenly bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, grieve when we’re unfaithful to Him? The point I’m trying to make to you is that God in heaven suffers. Those scars tell us that Jesus suffered in the flesh. He suffered. There’s no sorrow like the sorrow that the Lord Jesus Christ had. Now, the question comes—why? Why did He suffer? That moves us to the second point.

II. The Scars of Jesus Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Sympathizes

Not only do the scars tell us that Jesus, as a man, suffered; but the scars tell us, therefore, that Jesus, as a man, sympathizes. Many times, we think that nobody knows how we feel and how we hurt. But Jesus knows because He’s been there. He feels the

pain that you feel. He brought back these souvenirs of His scars to say, “I have been there. I hear. I understand your pain.” And He tells us through those scars that the pain of man—listen—has become the pain of God.

I want to give you two significant scriptures now. One is Hebrews chapter 2, verses 17 and 18, speaking of Jesus: “Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren—him refers to Jesus; His brethren, that refers to us—that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered—listen—he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor—which means to help—them that are tempted.” In plain English, Jesus feels your pain. Jesus knows. He’s not some distant God up there on a throne in spirit form who cannot be touched with our weaknesses. Put this scripture down—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, or tested like as we are, yet without sin.” He cares. He cares. I know He cares. His heart is touched with my grief. Friend, when you feel a pain, when you have a heartache, when you have a sorrow, when you go through Gethsemane, Jesus knows and He understands.

When I go into a home where there’s been a tragedy, a death, a sorrow, a terrible pronouncement from the doctor, a wayward son or child, I try not to say, “I understand,” because sometimes that’s an insult to people. They say, “You don’t understand. You don’t know how I feel.” And that may be true, but I’ll tell you this, that God does know. In our humanity we suffer, and God’s love allows it. Now, listen. In our humanity we suffer, and God’s love allows it. Our suffering is a sign of God’s love. You say, “Pastor, explain that to me, if you will.”

After Adam and Eve sinned, after the infection, the sickness of sin came into this world, God said to Adam and Eve, “Cursed is the ground...—now, listen—cursed is the ground for thy sake.” He didn’t say, “for your punishment,” but, “for your sake, for your welfare. Adam and Eve, the worst thing that could happen to you would be for you to have a sinful nature, to live in paradise with a sinful nature, and be immune to pain,” because the pain is the signal that something is wrong, radically wrong, that needs to be fixed.

Dr. Paul Brand was a great missionary and a medical doctor and a surgeon. Paul Brand was a missionary doctor to the lepers, and he saw the suffering that lepers went through. But one of the problems with leprosy is that the leper can no longer feel pain in the leprous parts of his body, and Dr. Brand talked about what a tragedy it was that lepers could not feel pain. And here’s what he says—and I quote this great doctor: “If I had the power to eliminate human pain, I would not exercise that right. Pain’s value is too great.” This doctor said, “If I could just kill all pain, I would not do it because I would

remove the value.” He said, “Rather, I would lend all of my energies in doing all that I can do to help when pain becomes suffering. I would try to alleviate the suffering, but I would not take away pain.” Pain is a sign of God’s love. You see, there is the protecting purpose of pain. Dr. Brand said that lepers sometimes they lose, if they have a limp, perhaps a strained muscle in their leg, but they have a leprous foot, and a leprous foot does not feel the pain, and so, God puts a limp that causes us not to put the weight down. But the leper doesn’t feel that. He just puts the pain down there. A leper, they say, will sometimes wear away a wounded part of his body because he feels no pain, none whatsoever. There is a protecting purpose in pain. The leper sometimes smoking a cigarette will burn the cigarette right on down till it burns his skin and never feel it. The pain is there to protect.

There’s a unifying purpose of pain. It’s pain that unifies the body. Dr. Brand said, “I can tell the health of a human body by its reaction to pain. If the body doesn’t react to pain, I know that something there is dreadfully wrong.” And what does that say about the church? It’s pain that unifies us as a church. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians, when one member suffers, every member suffers with it. We are drawn together by suffering. I’ve seen our people go to the homes of those who are hurting, and I’ve seen that koinonia, that fellowship of suffering that comes when we’re drawn together when one is hurting. When one member suffers, every member suffers with it, because the church is like a body.

I’ve often used this illustration. Have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer, maybe putting a picture on the wall for your wife, one that turns your thumbnail black later on? I wasn’t there, but I know what you did. First thing you did, you grabbed it like that. Second thing you did, you popped it in your mouth and sucked on it. Third thing you did was a little dance just like this. Now, why do you do that? I don’t know what your knees have to do with your thumb, I don’t know that, but I tell you what—you have to do that dance. When one member suffers, every member suffers with it.

Dr. Brand said, “You can tell something of the health of a church by the way that they respond to the hurting, the helpless, the homeless, the broken, the bruised, the battered, the bleeding, the impoverished when we come to the aid of that people. That means that the body is a healthy body because it’s responding to pain. There is the protecting power of pain. There is the unifying purpose of pain.

There is, friend, the correcting power of pain. It tells us that something is wrong. If we didn’t feel pain, we wouldn’t know that we’re sick, and we wouldn’t seek an answer. We live in a generation today that feels pain, but rather than trying to get the pain settled, all we do is we seek a sedative. That’s the reason why many kids are on drugs—the pain at home. They can’t get along with mother and father. They’re not understood. They’re not loved, so they get on drugs. And parents say, “My son doesn’t

even care.” I hate to tell you this, but when he’s on drugs, he doesn’t—he doesn’t. He has killed the pain. That’s why some people get on alcohol. They call that “drowning their sorrows.” They call that “feeling no pain.” So, alcohol is sort of a trip out of town, but it’s a round trip—they come back. They don’t drown their problems. Their problems can swim. The Japanese have a proverb: “First a man takes a drink. Then the drink takes a drink. And then the drink takes the man.” But why do we stupefy our minds? Because we’re seeking a sedative. That’s the reason some people get into an adulterous affair. They’re trying to kill the pain of loneliness and insecurity, and that’s the sedative. That’s the reason why so many people watch television and live in a make-believe world, because television may be the biggest sedative of all, not being able to look one’s self in the face, not being able to understand that pain is there to tell us there is an infection, there is a sickness. It has to be dealt with. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.”

Now, Jesus knows. Jesus understands. He came to earth and became a man that He might be a faithful high priest, that He might have compassion, that He might understand—and He does understand. Rather than trying to kill the pain with a sedative, what you need is a Savior. You need to come to the Lord Jesus. And I’ll tell you this: Jesus will hear the cry of a blind beggar before He’ll hear the cry of a proud Pharisee. He cares for you, and the Bible says you’re to cast all your care upon Him. Are you hurting? Is there a pain? Do you have a broken heart? Are you perplexed? He knows and He cares.

III. The Scars of Jesus Tell Us That, as a Man, Jesus Saves

The scars tell us that He is a suffering God. The scars tell us that, as a man, He is a sympathizing God. And the third and final thing, the scars tell us that He is a saving God—He is a saving God. The scars remind us that, as a man, Jesus saves—Jesus saves. Why those prints in His hands? Why that spear in His side? Why the nails in His feet? Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin. The Lord Jesus died on the cross to save us. Well, why did He do that? He didn’t have to. He didn’t die as a martyr. He didn’t die as a victim. He laid His life down. He said, “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.” In reality, it wasn’t the nails that held Him to the cross; it was the golden cords of love. They said of Him, “He saved others; himself he could not save.” That’s a lie. It was Himself He would not save. He did not save. He voluntarily, vicariously died for our sins. Why did He do that? He didn’t have to do that. Why? I mean, He’s God. He could have refused the cross. He was the only man who chose to die. No man, no other person has ever chosen to die. You say, “What about a suicide?” He doesn’t choose to die. All he does is to choose the time of his death. He’s going to die, anyway. He just decides to die a little early. There a new statistic on death—one out

of one people die. You're going to die. But Jesus did not have to die because He was not a sinner. "The wages of sin is death." He never sinned. He said, "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself." Now, why would He do that?

I want to ask you a question: If you and your wife are going to a vacation, say, maybe it's an anniversary, and you've saved your money, and you're going to Hawaii, and you're going to have the vacation of your life, and you want to have a wonderful time together, would you want to know while you're there on the golden shores of Hawaii, would you want to know if your son back home was in an automobile wreck? Would you want to know that and have it ruin your vacation? Would you want them to call you and say, "Your son is in critical condition in the hospital? Or had you rather just bask on the beach and lather on the sun lotion? Would you want to know? I don't even have to ask that question of any mother or father. Would your vacation be over? Would you leave paradise and go back home to the emergency room? Of course you would. Now, why would you do this? You could have left a message and said, "No matter what happens, don't disturb us. We don't want any calls from home. We're going to have a good time." Who would do that? Not a one. Why? Because love says, "I want to go there. I want to be there. I want to weep. I want to hurt. I want to heal. I want to stand by. I want to be there because your pain has become my pain." Why does God suffer? I'll tell you why. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." The scars tell us, as a man, He suffered. The scars tell us, as a man, He sympathizes. The scars tell us, as a man, He saves. Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin. He loves.

One man had a wayward son. That son was rebellious, wicked, cruel, obstinate. The son had been given chance after chance after chance by his parents. They had gone the second, third, fourth, umpteenth mile. And this man was telling his friend about his son, who was such a terrible son. And the man, whose son it was not, said to the man who was the true father, "If that were my son, I'll tell you what I'd do," and he was saying, in a sense, "cut him off. You've gone too far already. Just cut him off. If that were my son, this is what I would do." And the father of that wayward son said, "I can understand that. If he were your son, that's what I would do, but he's not your son; he's my son—he's my son—and I love him. No matter what he's done, I love him." No matter what you have done, God loves you. And God has chosen to make your pain, your hurt, His hurt. And this is why God became a man. He stepped out of the glory. He didn't have to do it. He's God. But the Bible teaches that as God, He is man. And as a man, He suffered. As a man, He sympathizes. As a man, He saves. That's what Christmas is about. That's why the babe of Bethlehem came to this earth: to suffer and bleed and die.

Phil Donahue told why he became disillusioned with Christianity. And he said this: “How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn’t He come down and go to Calvary?” The answer is, that’s exactly what He did. That’s exactly what He did. Second Corinthians 5:19: “To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” God was in Christ. He was the God-man. But He had to be a man. First Corinthians 15:21: “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” You say, “Well, I don’t believe in a sin passing upon everybody because of what one man did.” Well, you’d better believe in it, and thank God for it, because salvation comes also because of what one man did. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.”

When my first son was born, my pastor told me, “Adrian, you’re going to learn something when you have a son. Before you have a son, you think of the great love that the Savior had when He died for you, and that was great love. But after you have a son, you’ll think of the great love the Father had for you when He gave His Son.” And that is so true. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

What’s it all about? What is God in human flesh? What is a God with scars? It tells us that He came to earth that we might go to heaven. It tells us that He was born of a virgin that we might be born again. It tells us that He became the Son of man that we might become the sons and daughters of God. It tells us that He died that we might live. He is a suffering God. He is a sympathizing God. He is a saving God. He is the babe of Bethlehem, and He’s the Christ on the cross.

Conclusion

Now, let me come to a conclusion. I want you to learn this, that if Jesus suffered, you will too. God had only one Son without sin, but He doesn’t have any son without suffering. You will have some scars in this life. Philippians 3, verse 10 speaks of the fellowship of His suffering. The apostle Paul said in Galatians 6, verse 17: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” And the word for marks there in the Greek is the word *stigmata*—the nail prints. Now, Paul had some literal scars, but he had some spiritual scars. Paul suffered for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you suffered for Christ? May I tell you something? Listen to me carefully now. Your scars may be your greatest ministry. A scar is a wound that has healed. Do you know what convinced Thomas that Jesus was the Messiah, what caused Thomas to say to Jesus, “My Lord and my God?” It was not the preaching of the other apostles, who

said, “We’ve seen the Lord.” It was when he saw the scars in the hands and side of the Lord Jesus Christ that he said, “My Lord and my God.” What is a scar? A scar is a wound that has healed.

Thomas saw Him nailed on that cross. Thomas knew that He had been crucified. And now he sees the nail prints, but they’re healed, but the scar is still there. A scar is a wound that has healed. That caused him to believe.

Do you know what is going to cause some people to believe that your faith is real? When you’ve gone through the valley of suffering, when your heart is broken, when you’ve been crushed, when there’s been sorrow and there’s been wounding, and God in mercy there healed your broken heart, and people see that wound that has been healed, and they know that your God is real.

Many of you know that Joyce and I have a little boy in heaven. That’s a deep wound. We carried it to Jesus, and Jesus healed that wound. The first scripture that I saw after our little Philip went to heaven that Sunday afternoon on Mother’s Day when the boy died—I opened the Bible, the first scripture, one I’d never noticed, “Blessed be God, the God of all comfort and the Father of all mercies, who comforted us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” And God said, “Adrian and Joyce, I’m going to give you comfort. I’m going to heal you. Bring your wounds to me, and I will heal them, and then you comfort others with the comfort wherewith you are comforted of God.” And I’ve seen Joyce take her nail-scarred hands and wrap them around other mothers who’ve lost little babies, and I’ve seen her minister with her scars—not literal scars—you understand what I’m saying. Friend, you’re going to suffer in this world. Let me give you some good advice. Bring your wounds to Jesus. He knows. He cares. And use your scars for Jesus. It may be your greatest testimony. Use your scars for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want every head bowed, every eye closed. I want you to imagine the Lord Jesus now on the throne. See Him ascended. See Him enthroned in heaven with those scars in His hands. Do you see Him there? See Him in your mind’s eye upon that throne. And I want you to see those hands as they’re reaching out to you right now. Can you see those nail-scarred hands reaching out to you? I want to remind you, friend, that He’s been here. He knows, He cares, and He’s able to give you comfort. Let Him touch your broken heart right now. Cast your care upon Him. Cast your care upon Him. He cares for you. And those of you who are lost, do you see those nail-pierced hands reaching out to you? They say to you that your sin debt has been paid in full, that He died for you. He wants to save you, and He will save you, if you’ll trust Him.

Precious friend, this Christmas season, don’t blot out the pain with sedatives and at the same time lock out God. That pain is to bring you to Jesus. Jesus is the God with

scars, the God who has suffered, the God who sympathizes, and the God who saves.

If you're not saved, let me guide you in a prayer right now. Pray this prayer: Dear God—Just pray—Dear God, thank You that You love me. Thank You, Lord, that You cared enough to come to this earth to enter into my pain and my suffering. What a glorious Savior. Now, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Jesus. Pray it from your heart and mean it. Did you ask Him? Did you? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it, Jesus. I receive it by faith and that settles it. You're now my Lord and my Savior, my God, and my Friend. I put my hand in your nail-scarred hand. Thank You, Jesus, thank You. Now, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make this public. Help me never, ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. 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 at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to receive those of you who'll be coming forward. And for those of you who are in the balcony who'll be coming, I'm going to ask a minister to stand under that banner to my left that says Messiah and another to stand under this one to my right up here in the corner that says Redeemer, for those of you who'll be moving that way. And we're going to sing a song that says, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now." And when we sing that, if you prayed that prayer, I want you to do something that will help settle it and seal it. I want you to come forward. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." There's something about a public acknowledgment of Christ that gives Him glory, that settles it and seals it, that shames the devil. That's why I ask you to do it. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." "Well, Pastor Rogers, I've never done that. What would I say when I go down there?" Just say this: "I'm trusting Jesus." "Well, Pastor, what will happen?" Well, first of all, we'll rejoice. Secondly, we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Thirdly, we'll answer any questions we can answer, and we'll seal with you in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. It'll be a wonderful thing. If I could do it for you, I would, but I cannot. I've preached as best I know. And He's reaching out to you a nail-scarred hand today. Trust Him. Trust Him and make it public. Do it today.

Others of you today are saved and perhaps you've already acknowledged Christ some other time or some other place, but you need a church home. I want to invite you to come at the same time, and you can say to the minister, "Look, I've been saved, that's settled, but I want to place my membership here." Just say, "I want to place my membership here," and he'll tell you how you may become a member of this church. And listen, folks. Every Christian ought to be a member of a local New Testament church, if possible; if not Bellevue, one somewhere. If this is where you worship and where God speaks to your heart, most likely this is where God wants you to belong. And

so, when we stand and sing, don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. You be the first one out if you can, absolutely be the first one. Lead the way for others.

Some are coming, saying, 'I'm trusting Christ.' Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation unless it is a genuine emergency, or before the benediction for that matter, unless it is an emergency. If you're with somebody who needs to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with them. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus.

Now, let's pray. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus that You, Lord, would open hearts and, Lord, that You would move upon the hearts of people to obey You, to love You, to follow You, because You died for us. In Jesus' name.

Let's stand together now as we sing. You step out and come. †

The Scars of Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 16, 1995

Main Scripture Text: John 20:24–31

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”

JOHN 20:27

Outline

Introduction

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Introduction

You know, after the Lord Jesus came victoriously out of that grave, He appeared to His disciples. The first time He appeared to His disciples, Thomas was not there. And when the other disciples told Thomas they'd see the risen Lord, Thomas didn't believe it. He said, "I would have to see the prints in his hands, I would have to see that wound in his side before I would believe that he'd been raised from the dead." And, with that in mind, I want you to listen as we read here in John chapter 20, verse 24: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said unto them, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' Then saith he to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said unto him, 'My Lord and my God.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'" And, by the way, you can just put your name by that verse, Amen? He's talking about you. He's talking

about you dear friend. “Blessed are they,”—Jesus calls you tonight “blessed”—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Thomas said, “Unless I see the print of the nails in his hand. Unless I thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Here’s a question, I think you already know the answer, what is the only manmade thing in heaven? The only manmade thing in heaven are the scars that Jesus still bears in His hands and in His sides. Did you know that Jesus took those scars to heaven with Him? Those scars that men made, Jesus transported those scars to heaven. You say, “Pastor, how do you know that is true?” Well, the Bible describes when Jesus comes again and the Bible describes that in Old Testament prophecy in Zachariah chapter 13 in verse 6. And it speaks of those who will behold the Lord when He comes in His glory and His resurrected body: “And one shall say unto him, ‘What are these wounds in thine hands?’ Then he shall answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’” He will have those scars with Him, and does have those scars with Him now, and will have them for all eternity.

I. He Is a Suffering God

Now, I want to mention to you tonight three things that we can learn from those scars in that nail-scarred hand. The very first thing that we can learn is: That Jesus literally suffered. Those nails caused indescribable pain. It’s not just the piercing of the nails but it is that hanging upon the cross, the convulsions, the injury to the median nerve that caused every nerve in His body to be a pathway for the footprints of pain to make every part of His body a river of anguish. Jesus did not suffer as some kind of a phantom, as a God who would just say, “Oh well, this doesn’t bother me.” Jesus suffered in indescribable anguish. These scars tell us about the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now some people don’t believe in God because of what they call the problem of science. They don’t believe in the supernatural, they think it is superstition therefore they don’t believe in God for that reason. Oh but let me tell you, there’s a bigger problem for most people, and it’s not the problem of science, it’s the problem of suffering. Over and over again people will ask this question, “If there is a God, why is there so much suffering. Why doesn’t God do something about all this suffering?” And so they begin to think, “Well maybe he has the power to remove suffering but he really doesn’t care.” Then that would mean He’s a God of no love. Or they say, “Maybe he really does care and wants to remove the suffering but he doesn’t have the power.” Then that means He’s a weak God. Or maybe they say, “Well maybe he has no power or no love. Maybe there’s no God at all, why all this suffering?” And every one of us can

think of times when we have seen suffering and we've said, "Why does God allow this?"

I mean if you've been a pastor very long friend, you've been to the hospital sometimes when you would just have to say, "God, why? Why?" And sometimes there are questions that I would never ever endeavor to answer. But I want to tell you something, precious friend, there's a bigger question than, "Why do we suffer?" and it's "Why does God suffer?" These nail prints tell us that God suffered. Jesus was God in the flesh and it was God that was suffering.

And there are scriptures that teach us that God suffers, Isaiah 42, verse 14. God's speaking of His people and He says concerning them and over them, He says, "I cry like a travailing woman. God says, "I feel the pain that a woman feels when she's giving birth." Ladies tell us, you men will never know the pain of bringing a child into this world. Well, God knows. God says, "I cry like a travailing woman." In Isaiah chapter 63, verse 9, God speaks of the affliction of His people and the Bible says, "In all of their affliction, He was afflicted."

Now God suffers. God can suffer and really it makes sense if you think about it. If you're a father, don't you suffer when your children suffer? When I had my first child whose name is Steve, my pastor told me, "Adrian, now you're going to learn more about the love of God." He said, "Before you have your own children you'll think about how much Jesus loved you that He died on the cross, but now that you have your own children you're going to think about how much God loved you that He gave His own Son." And that is true. My little son had to have surgery when he was just a little baby. And I can tell you I can remember standing in that hospital in New Orleans and looking at that little fella when they were wheeling him away and I thought, "They're going to cut on his little body." And everything in me said, "Oh I wish, I wish I could do that for him." But I can tell you folks, to have sons, to have daughters means that somewhere, somehow you're going to suffer, isn't that true?

And you know, you think about it, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Did you know God's Spirit can be grieved? And by the way, that's one of the great proofs of the trinity and one of the great proofs of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Jehovah Witnesses' tell us the Holy Spirit is only a force, an emanation coming from God. Oh no, you can't grieve a force. The Holy Spirit is a person. "And grieve not the Spirit of God; whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And do you know the only thing that causes grief is love. Your lawn mower may vex you; your children grieve you, right, because you love them.

And why is the Holy Spirit grieved? Because He loves us so much. You think about it. Does God suffer? Well, does a father suffer when his children suffer or when his children do wrong and grieve him, of course. Or let me put it this way, Jesus is the head of the body, the church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, when the body hurts

does the head know it? Does the head suffer when the body feels pain? There are messages of pain sent to the head from all over the body when the body suffers. And the body of Jesus Christ is suffering today. There are Christians who are being put to death and being martyred, and His body feels pain.

When Jesus confronted Paul, who at that time was Saul, who was on the road to Damascus, Jesus confronted him with this question, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Well, who was Paul persecuting? The church, but Jesus said, “You are persecuting me.” The point is clear; to persecute the church is to persecute Jesus. And when the church suffers, Jesus suffers. Paul talked about filling up the sufferings of Christ. He wasn’t talking about His sufferings on that cross but His continual sufferings where the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is persecuted.

I want to ask you another question: If a husband has an unfaithful wife, do you think that man suffers? Of course he does. To learn that his wife, who pledged to be true to him to him only and to him always, has been an adulteress, well don’t you think that our Lord’s heart is wounded when His bride is unfaithful to Him? “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity”—warfare—“with God?” Don’t you think that the great heart of the Savior, the heavenly bridegroom, hurts when He sees some who are unfaithful to Him? The scars tell us this; that He suffered. The scriptures tell us this; He still suffers. And the next time you have difficulty wondering why human beings suffer, let me just make the question even bigger and harder, “Why would God suffer?”

Now, you and I suffer because sometimes we can’t help it. I mean we don’t have any choice about it. But God is God; God doesn’t have to do anything.

II. He Is a Sympathizing God

So why does God willingly, deliberately, choose to suffer? Why those scars? They tell us number one; He’s a suffering God. And that tells me number two; He’s a sympathizing God. When you see those scars when He comes again, they will be a lasting memorial to the fact that He knows, He feels.

Listen to 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”—tested—“like as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus knows pain. Don’t think He doesn’t understand the pain that you go through. Because He’s a suffering God, He’s a sympathizing God. The shortest verse in the Bible in the English is this: “Jesus wept.” He was a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief. The Bible speaks of the Lord Jesus seeing the multitudes; the Bible says He was moved with compassion. The word “compassion” is a compound word, “com” meaning, “with and passion to feel.” That’s the reason we call the suffering of Christ the passion play. It speaks of the sufferings of our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ. He was moved with compassion and this is; He feels what we feel. And those scars tell us that the pain of man has become the pain of God.

Pain, therefore, is not a sign that God does not love us. As a matter of fact, God's love allows pain. God said to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, "Cursed is the ground for your sake," not for your punishment, "for your sake." Living in a world that has the curse of sin, it must also know the curse of suffering for our sake. Think about what pain does.

A. The Protecting Purpose of Pain

There's the protecting purpose of pain. Dr. Charles Bran, a physician who worked so long with the lepers, a great Christian man, said that the lepers sometimes will not shift their feet when they walk as you and I do, or when we jog, and they just literally wear away their toes and wear away the bottom of their feet because they can't feel. Sometimes when they smoke cigarettes they'll smoke the cigarette right on down until it burns their fingertips and not feel any pain. It's pain that has a purpose. There's the protecting purpose of pain.

B. The Unifying Purpose of Pain

Then there's the unifying purpose of pain. It's pain that makes us need one another. You know the Bible speaks of the body of Christ and it says when one member suffers every member suffers with it. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 26. It's our pain, our sorrow that keeps us from being so independent. John Wesley's mother was asked, "Which of your eleven children do you love the most?" Can you imagine asking her that? Boy she wasn't caught flat-footed, here was her answer, "I love the one who is sick until he is well and the one who's away until he comes home." You see there's something about love that just draws us together.

C. The Corrective Purpose of Pain

Then there's the corrective purpose of pain. If you put your hand on a hot stove, that pain sends a message to your brain and says, "it's hot down here" and your brain sends a message back to the hand and says, "then move." And it goes just like that. But that pain has to go all the way to the head and back before the hand moves. You see, the universe has a disease and God cannot remove the pain until the last vestige of sin is gone. The worst thing that could happen to human beings is to live in a world cursed by sin and yet the world seems to be a paradise. We would never come to God.

And pain comes in all forms not just physical pain. There's emotional pain and spiritual pain. Have you ever wondered why we have so many today who are on drugs, so many teenagers? They're trying to kill the pain. They're trying to get themselves to where they cannot feel. Why do people drink? Because they are trying to kill the pain, they are trying to drown their sorrows; we've heard that, haven't we? Of course they find

out that those sorrows can swim. First a man takes a drink and then the drink takes a drink and then the drink takes the man and he has double sorrow. But that's why they do it.

Why do men and women go off and have an extramarital affair, commit adultery? They are trying to kill the pain of loneliness, pain of insecurity. Why do people watch so much television? They just don't want to face life. They don't want to think. It's too much pain if they ever sat down and thought seriously about the issues of life. They watch television until their eyes get big as coconuts and their brain the size of a pea, just wanting to amuse themselves. The word "amuse" means, "not to think." You put the alpha prefix in front of a word; "a" means "no." A museum is a place where you think. Amusement means, "not to think."

But why do we get all these sedatives? Whether it be an affair, whether it be amusement, whether it be drugs or alcohol, we're trying to kill the pain. People don't need a sedative; they need a savior. And the problem is they're going to the wrong place. The scars tell us this: number one; He's a suffering God. They tell us number two; He's a sympathizing God. He knows, He feels, He is touched with the feeling of your infirmity. He cares for you and you can cast all your care upon Him.

III. He Is a Saving God

But here's the third thing that those scars tell us, those scars tell us He is a saving God. You see what is a scar? A scar is a wound that has healed. Isaiah 53, verse 5, listen to it, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." He was wounded; he was pierced with those nails for our sins. Now He didn't have to suffer but He invaded our sufferings so number one, He could bear them, so number two, He could heal them. And a scar is a wound that is healed.

I want to ask you a question. Suppose you're taking your dream vacation, I mean the absolute vacation that you and your wife have saved money for, you've gone to this place, and everything is wonderful. It's going to be the best time that you and your wife have ever known. And let's suppose that the children that you've left back home have your phone number and they know where you are. And let's suppose your son or your daughter is in an automobile accident, a serious automobile accident. Now there's nothing you could do. I mean you're not a physician, you're not a doctor, there's nothing you could really do to make them better. I want to ask you a question: Would you want to know about it? Or, would you say, "No I don't want to know about it, it would ruin my vacation." Would you want to know about it even if there was nothing you could do? I'll guarantee you; you would want to know about it. Why, because of your great love.

Why does God choose to suffer? For the same reason. And only a greater reason,

that you would leave that vacation spot and enter into their suffering with them. And the difference is God can do something and God has done something and that's why He has come down to this earth because He's a saving God. Phil Donahue said this one time, he said, "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" Of course the answer is, that's exactly what He did. That's exactly what He did. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." God came down, the suffering God, the sympathizing God is the saving God.

Now those scars are wounds that have healed to show us that a price has been paid. Listen to me know, Jesus had some scars and if you follow Him you will have some scars. Colossians 1, verse 24, Paul speaks of filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, "in my flesh." Do you suffer for Jesus? Do you have any scars? They don't have to be physical scars; they can be emotional scars and spiritual scars. Here's what Paul said in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." We say, "Well, yes I want to know the power of His resurrection." Now listen to the rest of it, "And the fellowship of His sufferings."

You'll never have sweeter fellowship with Jesus than when you suffer for Him. That's one of the secrets that I have learned in life. When you stand for Christ and for whatever reason you're misused, abused, criticized, or whatever, and you know that He knows that the reason that's happening is because you've been true to him, I'm going to tell you something folks, He'll never be sweeter and more meaningful to you than at that time. It's what the Bible calls, "the fellowship of His suffering." It's a wonderful, wonderful thing. That was the ambition of the Apostle Paul, "That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings."

Now, Paul said in Galatians chapter 6, in verse 17, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," literally the scars. The Greek word is the "stigmata," the word we get our word "stigmatism" from. It was a brand like a slave would be branded. He said, "I bear the brand marks, the stigma, the scars of following Jesus." Now Paul could say that literally. I mean, he had literal scars. Most of us don't have any scars; we are more interested in stars, but he had scars. Jesus in that upper room showed them the wounds in His hand that had been healed.

Now listen to me very carefully. Your scars may be your greatest ministry. What was it that caused Thomas to believe? The scars. Why, because a scar is a wound that is healed. And when Thomas saw that, it was not that Thomas believed in the resurrection when he saw the crucifixion, it was when Thomas saw the wound that was healed in the hands and in the side of the Lord Jesus. It was then that he fell down and said, "My Lord and My God." When people see you suffer for Christ and see Him give you comfort and

see you healed or see you go through any suffering, whether it comes from any source, and receive strength from Christ, that will be your greatest testimony.

Conclusion

And I'll tell you one thing, the world says anybody can be a Christian in the sunshine. But, oh friend, when we use our scars as a testimony, where God comforts us and thereby we can comfort others with the same comfort where with we ourselves are comforted of God, what a testimony it is. Let me tell you about the scars of Jesus that Thomas saw after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They tell us that Jesus Christ is a suffering God, He is a sympathizing God, He is a saving God. And today, if you hurt, I've got some advice for you: Bring your wounds to Jesus and use your scars for Jesus. And if you're lost tonight and not saved, I want to remind you that those scars tell you that your sin debt has been paid in full.

Now don't try to block out the pain with sedatives and at the same time block out God. Bring your sin, bring your sorrow to Jesus and you put your faith where God put your sins, on the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray this prayer: Dear God, I know that you love me. Now those scars show that you love me and I know Lord that you've been victorious over the grave and those scars prove it. And now Lord Jesus, I want those wounded hands, those nail-pierced hands, to take my sin. Oh Lord, forgive my sin, cleanse me, come into my heart Lord Jesus and save me. In your holy name I pray, Amen.

The Secret of Service

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 10, 1985

Main Scripture Text: John 21:15–18

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.”

JOHN 21:15

Outline

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- B. Jesus Did Not Ask, “Do You Repent of Your Sin?”
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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles please and turn to the Gospel of John and turn please to John chapter 21. And, we’re going to look at a very interesting question. John chapter 21, we begin reading in verse 15: *“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me”* (John 21:15–19).

The Secret of Service. I want to give you some background for the passage of Scripture that I just read to you. Bloody Calvary is only a few days old. Simon Peter has cursed, he has sworn three times, and he has denied that he's even known the Lord. He's gone out to weep bitterly. Now, the disciples have heard that Jesus Christ is alive, but He's been raised from the dead. The disciples are in a fog as it were. They are half-believing and half-doubting. They don't know whether they can believe it or not. These disciples are restless. They're perplexed. They are disturbed. They had been told by the Savior to wait in Jerusalem until they were induced with power from on high. But, in disobedience and out of the will of God they had gone to Galilee. And, there at Galilee they were wondering what they should do.

Simon Peter said, "*I go a fishing*" (John 21:3). He was just going back to the old way, the old life. The other disciples said, "We'll go with you." And, so these commercial fishermen set out there on the sea of Galilee to fish, but the Lord had told all the fish to go hide. All night long they fished and not one fish had they caught. It reminds me of some fishing trips that I had been on. I believe that this time Simon Peter never felt lower in his life. Remember that he's already denied the Lord. He already feels so incriminated. And, now he's tried fishing and he can't even fish any more. He's tired, he's wet, he's hungry, he's discouraged, and he is ashamed.

About this time, early in the morning they see a figure on the shore. It's about a hundred yards to the shore. They see a figure, they can't quite tell who it is, but He yells out to them. He says, "Hey fellows, have you caught anything?" Boy, don't you hate for people to ask you that question when you haven't. They had to confess that they hadn't. And, so he says, "*Cast the net on the right side of the ship*" (John 21:6). They may have thought it first, but they didn't know it was the Lord. They may have thought, "Well, maybe this stranger sees a school of fish or something."

And, they cast their net on the other side and you know what happened? There were so many fish encircled in that net that they weren't even able to pull the net into the boat. Now, at that time they realized who it was that was speaking to them. Somebody says, "*It is the Lord*" (John 21:7). Simon Peter had been stripped down for fishing, he put on his fishermen's coat, he couldn't wait for the others, he jumps in and makes his way to the shore, and he beats the rest to the shore. You have to love this guy, don't you? You have to thank God for his enthusiasm if nothing else. And, and I'll tell you, he beats everybody else there, the rest of the disciples come in dragging those fish to the shore.

When they get there, Jesus has prepared a meal. There is a charcoal fire and Jesus has some fish that are filleted and out they're roasting, being broiled on an open fire. Also, there's some bread there. Now, quite obviously He got the fish from the Sea of Galilee. At least I suppose He did. I wonder where He got the bread. Do you know what

I like to think? I can't prove this, but I just like to think He turned stones into bread. "Not when you want me to Satan, but when I want to do it." But, whenever He did it, however He got that bread, I don't know, but there is that aroma. Can you imagine a fishermen whose been all night long fishing and can smell that breakfast that the Lord Jesus had prepared there on the shore?

And, then He said something and I believe it must have been a wonderful, wonderful invitation. As these hungry, forlorn disciples and fishermen heard the Savior say, "*Come, and dine*" (John 21:12). And, what a meal that must have been as they sat thereupon the fish and the bread. After that meeting, Jesus turned to Simon Peter and asked the greatest question that can be asked to Simon Peter, and can be asked of any man. It gets right to the heart of the matter. He said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" In plain English, "Simon Johnson, do you love Me? Simon Johnson, do you love Me?" Now, I say that question came like a javelin from the hand of Jesus, right into the heart of Peter because it gets right to the heart of the matter.

A. Jesus Did Not Ask About Peter's Doctrine

Notice Jesus did not ask Simon Peter. "Simon Peter, do you believe My doctrine?" You can be doctrinally straight and not love the Lord Jesus. And, as a matter of fact, I've met some people that way. And, they're cantankerous and hard to deal with. They can split a theological hair in sixteen equal divisions, but they don't seem to love the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not saying we ought not to be doctrine straight, but doctrine is no substitute for loving the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, if we love Him, we will believe His Word.

B. Jesus Did Not Ask, "Do You Repent of Your Sin?"

He didn't ask Simon Peter, "Simon Peter, do you repent of your sin?" He said, "Simon Peter, do you love Me?" Because, if I love the Lord Jesus, I will repent of my sins. But, you can't repent of your sin without loving the Lord Jesus. He didn't say, "Simon Peter, do you have faith in Me?" Oh, we ought to have faith in Him just as we ought to repent of our sin, and just as we ought to believe His gospel. But, He didn't ask him, "Simon Peter, do you have faith in Me?" Because you see, if we love Him, we will trust Him. And, there's some tonight who trust Him in a sense, who do not really, in truly love Him.

C. Jesus Didn't Ask, "Are You Keeping My Commandments?"

He didn't say, "Simon Peter, are keeping My commandments?" Because if we love Him, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" Jesus said (John 14:15). So, this is a pertinent question. It is a pressing question. Hey, it is a personal question. I want you for a moment to forget that I am the preacher tonight and I want you to use some sanctified imagination. And, I want you to imagine Jesus Christ in the pulpit and only one person, in this auditorium. And, He's asking you this question, what is your name, first and last

name, so you know it's you. And, He says to you, "Do you love Me?" Now, I want you to hear that question as coming. You can't answer that question for anybody else, I want you to hear Him asking that question to you. "Do you love Me?" It comes to you and it must be answered by you.

Now, I want to say something right away. That profession of faith does not necessarily mean that you love Jesus. For example, Simon Peter had made a profession of faith. Do you remember there in Matthew chapter 16, that great profession of faith, that great confession, where Simon Peter said to Jesus, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16)? That's pretty orthodox, wasn't it? I mean, he got an A plus on that.

D. Jesus Did Not Ask About Peter's Orthodoxy

You see, listen to me now. Orthodoxy without love is but a grave to bury Jesus Christ. I am not against orthodoxy. You ought to know me better than that. But, I am telling you, dear friend, that He did not ask Simon Peter, "Simon Peter, what about your profession of faith?" Simon Peter already made a profession of a faith. It was an orthodox profession of a faith. Just like many of you have made, but even after that profession of faith, the question comes, "Do you love Me?"

You see, you can know all about Jesus and cross every "T" and dot every "I" and still perhaps not love Him, as you ought.

Years ago, I use to carry in my billfold a card that had all of the facts and figures about my wife, well not all of them, but quite a few of them. At least it told what size dress she wore, what size shoe, what size glove, and all of these kind of things in case Adrian ever wanted to buy her a present somewhere and his memory was weak, he had that card. And, that card was right, there's all the statistics on that card were right. And, when I would be off somewhere in another town, and lonely for my wife, you know what I'd do, I'd just pull out that card and look at and it would satisfy every need I had because all the facts were there. You know better than that don't you?

Now, let me tell you something friend, to have the facts is one thing, to have that woman in your arms is something else. Amen? Now, listen, you can know the facts about the Lord Jesus. I'm not asking you, "Are you a card carrying Christian?" I ought to know, "Do you love Jesus? It wasn't the profession that He asked about, it wasn't position that He asked about. You see, the man to whom Jesus asked this question was an Apostle. As a matter of fact, he was one of the leaders of the Apostles. So, that brings me to something else. I have to be careful when I ask this question as though the question is not being asked to me.

E. Jesus Didn't Ask About Peter's Position

You see, he doesn't ask about position. I have asked myself as a preacher, "Preacher,

do you love Jesus?" You know, you can be a preacher and not love Jesus. You can be a deacon and not love Jesus. You can be a seminary professor and not love Jesus. It's not a matter of position. It's not a matter of profession. It is a matter, do you love the Lord Jesus. We might have asked Judas that question. "Judas, do you love Jesus?" He says, "Well, I'm a church member." "I didn't ask you that. Judas, do you love Jesus?" "I'm a charter member." "I didn't ask you that Judas, do you love Jesus?" "I'm the treasurer." But, he doesn't love Jesus. So, Jesus didn't ask about profession, He didn't ask about position. He didn't say, "Peter, have you had some fine privileges in your life?" You see, Peter was a man who had some privileges. He was with James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. I quoted that Scripture this morning from 2 Peter chapter 1, where Simon Peter says, we "*were eyewitnesses of his majesty*" (2 Peter 1:16).

Now, the question comes to you tonight from the Lord Jesus Christ not what kind of revelations have you had. Not, what kind of visions, and what kind of ecstasies, and what kind of insights have you had. That's not the question tonight. God may have revealed all kinds of wonderful things to you, you may be a fine Bible teacher, you may have insights into the Word of God, and there may have been times when you had your own counterpart of being an eyewitness of His majesty. But, that's not the question tonight. The question is not about privilege, not about mountain top experiences, not about revival meetings that you've been in, but the question again is, do you love Jesus?

F. Jesus Did Not Ask About Peter's Performance

I want to say something else. Jesus didn't ask him about performance. Now, Peter, he knew something about performance. He was the one who had it rough on the water, but He didn't ask him about. He'd helped catch a hundred and fifty-three fish, but He didn't ask him about that. You see, after they finished counting the fish, He still ask him, "Do you love Me? Some of you have the gift of evangelism. And, you're a soul winner and you bring folks down this isle. You come Sunday after Sunday bringing your fish with you. Thank God for that, but He doesn't ask about performing.

Did you know that a man, did you know that a man can be so gifted that he can win souls not as he ought and not as he should, but he can win souls without loving Jesus? Now, he'll get no reward for the souls that go to Heaven, but you see, the question is not dear friend, about your performance, not what have you have done, but do you love the Lord Jesus.

Now, let me tell you something that's very wonderful before I get right into the very heart of the matter. The wonderful thing about this thing is not only should you love Jesus, but also you can love Jesus? I thank God for the way that Clyde Cranford sang. Very few people will be able to sing as well as Clyde Cranford can sing, but I want to tell

you something, anybody here can love Jesus as much as Clyde Cranford, isn't that wonderful? Now, there are some of you who are going to give great sums of money, I trust to claiming our Canaan. And, maybe they'll be others who won't have anything to give or very little to give, but you can love Jesus just as much as that person who gives great sums of money.

Some people have the ability to stand up and take the Word of God, and teach the Word of God, and unpick the divine mysteries, and we thank God for that. But, friend, there's one thing that you can do and I can do as well as anybody here on the face of this earth. Boys and girls can do it, men and women can do it, young and old can do it, and rich and poor can do it. And, there's something that nobody has a monopoly on and that is loving the Lord Jesus Christ. And, by the way, that is the most important thing, that's the thing that Jesus is asking you tonight. "Do you love Me?" We're not talking about privilege, we're not talking about performance, we're not talking about profession, but we are talking about loving Jesus. Do you love the Lord Jesus?

I. Loving Jesus Is the Secret of Service

Now, I said that I wanted to speak to you tonight about "The Secret of Service." You see, loving Jesus is the secret of service. Look again in chapter 21 and verse 15. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." Now, pay attention. Jesus did not ask Simon Peter, "Simon Peter, do you love sheep?" He said, "Do you love Me?" He didn't say, "Simon Peter, do you love to feed sheep?" He says, "Do you love Me?"

Do you know the requirement for being a pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church? It is not to love the people and it is not to love to preach. It is to love Jesus Christ. You see, you know the requirement for being a Sunday school teacher? It is not to love your class. That's not the requirement. It is not to love to teach the Bible. It is a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love for Jesus Christ. And, when you love Jesus, then you'll love His sheep. When you love Jesus, then you will love His Word. But, the prime requirement, the secret of service is to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes people will have a Sunday school class, and especially men who sometimes get talked into teaching a class of teenage boys, or we use to call junior boys just before they get to be teenagers. Do you know what I'm talking about? Trouble on wheels. And, they will try that for a while. And, then after a while they'll come out and they'll say, "I don't want to teach that class any more. Those boys don't want to learn anything. They don't pay attention. They throw spitballs, they write on the table, they do this, they do that, and I don't want to teach them any more. They're bad boys." Well friend, if bad boys don't need a Sunday school teacher, who in the world does? That's

the reason you are there and God doesn't say, "Do you love teaching boys?" Jesus is asking, "Do you love Me? If you love Me, then you will feed My sheep."

Now, Jesus was asking Simon Peter this right after Simon Peter had eaten of Jesus' bread and eaten at Jesus' table. You see, the proof of love for the Lord Jesus Christ is not that you eat what He serves, but that you serve others, that you feed others. Not that you eat at His table, but that you feed others in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Now, what I'm saying is this that it is love for Jesus that is the secret of service and if you're a deacon in this church, if you're a choir member in this church, if you're on a committee in this church, or if you are on the staff of this church and if you serve for any other reason than that you love Jesus, then quit it or get right. You will have a deadening influence if you don't get right with God. You say, "Well, I just love music, I want to sing in the choir." That's not good enough. "I just love playing instruments." That's not good enough. "I just love to teach." That's not good enough. Do you love Jesus? Do you love Jesus? If you love Him, then you can feed His sheep.

II. Loving Jesus Is the Secret of Steadfast Service

That is, dear friend, the secret of service, but not only is it the secret of service, but it is the secret of steadfast service. Look in verse 18 now. Jesus says to Peter, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." That is, "Simon Peter, you're going to be an old man, you're going to live to be an old man."

Now, listen, what made Simon Peter go all the way to the end? What made him steadfast? By the way, Simon Peter did love Jesus and Jesus knew that he loved Him. And, He wanted Simon Peter to relearn the love that, "Simon, follow me, and I will make you too become." You will become like Jesus when you follow Him.

And, so love for Jesus is necessary to follow Him. And, friend, to follow Him is to be like the Lord Jesus. When you come after Him, when you follow Him. Have you ever noticed that when people live together for a long time they get to looking alike. I'm talking about husbands and wives. I can think of some couples here in our church, some of the most precious couples, Barbara and Harry Johnson, they kind of look alike don't they? And, they kind of act alike. Orel and Ora Ledbetter, they just kind of look alike. Now, I want to say that Ora is much better looking than Orel. Now, don't get me wrong. But, I'm saying that there's just something about couples. And, people when they stay together even in marriage, they live together long enough, and before long you think rather than husband and wife, they're almost brother and sister. That's strange isn't it?

Conclusion

And, the more we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we love Jesus, the more we live with Jesus, and the more we follow Jesus then the more we are like Jesus. Friend, don't you want to be sanctified? That means, just more and more of Jesus, more and more like Him. I'm asking you the question, and it's a simple question. But, I'm asking you tonight do you love the Lord Jesus? I've asked myself that question tonight before I preached this sermon. And, do you know what? I'm going to let you in on a secret, maybe it's not a secret to you, but I let the Lord ask me that question tonight. And, I said, "Lord, you know all things. You know I love you." And, do you know what His Spirit said to me? "I know it Adrian, you love Me, you love Me." And, I do love Him. Not as I ought to and not as I'm going to, but I love the Lord Jesus. And, I want to bring this church to a place where it is said of us above all things, "They love Jesus, they love Jesus." Will you bow your heads in prayer?